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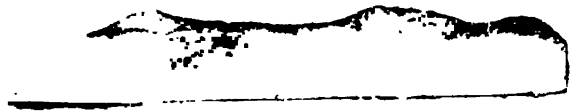
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ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A Weekly Journal.

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CHARLES DICKENS.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
A VALIANT IGNORANCE. A		Chartered South African Com-		Grattar, Henry . . .	248
Serial Story, by Mary Angela		pany . . .	392	Gunpowder, Explosions by . .	196
Dickens, 1, 25, 49, 78, 97, 121,		Chaucer's Poetry . . .	345		
145, 169, 193, 217, 241, 265, 289,		Chicago Exposition . . .	179	HAIR-DYES. . . .	329
313, 337, 361, 385, 409, 433, 457,		Chiswick House . . .	342	Happiness of Work . . .	419
481, 505, 529, 553		Christie's Sales . . .	613	Haworth, Landslip at . . .	326
MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS. A		City—the Dinner-Hour . .	473	Henry the Eighth a-Maying .	402
Serial Story, by Eleanor C.		Cleopatra and Antony, Din-		Holmürth Landslip . . .	327
Price, 19, 41, 67, 91, 116, 139, 162		ners of . . .	295	Homes at the Antipodes . . .	40
OUTLAWED. A Short Serial		Colebrook, Landslip at . .	323	Horatian Folk-lore . . .	155
Story, 336, 378, 404, 428, 452,		Collectors of Works of Art .	512	Hospital, Royal Eye . . .	251
476, 500, 523, 549, 572		Colonisation of Mashonaland .	396	House of Lords, The Irish .	370
		Concerning Knockers . .	521	"Howe," Grounding of the .	444
AFRICA—MASHONALAND. . .	389	Concerning Sofas . . .	582		
After the Boat-Race . . .	341	Concerning Trumpets . .	567	IMAGINARY TRAVELS. . .	569
Agricultural Labourer, Life of		Conversation, The Art of .	281	Imperial Dinners . . .	295
the . . .	160	Cookery, Imperial Roman .	295	Imperial Institute Opening .	488
Aids to Beauty . . .	328	Country Life . . .	559	India—Bhogeraj Doosad . .	205
"Ajax," Loss of the . . .	440	County Council Lodgings for		In Difficulties . . .	9
Alexander, Czar, Assassination		the Poor . . .	276	In London: and Out of It .	558, 584
of . . .	199	Courage . . .	636	Ireland—Burning of the Sheas	139
Along the Track . . .	34	Court of Bankruptcy . .	12	Ireland—Donegal Sketches .	447, 467
America—Coyote Hunting . .	462	Coyote Hunting—A Western		Ireland, Duelling in . . .	240
America—Western Sketches,		Sketch . . .	462	Irish Dnals . . .	249
84, 103, 319, 462		Crowd at the Opening of the		Irish House of Lords: A Ro-	
Amersham, Town of . . .	417	Imperial Institute . . .	490	manance of . . .	370
"Amphion," Frigate, Loss of				Irish Parliament, The Old .	247
the . . .	440	DAIGNY AND GIVONNE. . .	184	Irish Parliament, The Old—	
Ancient Customs on May-day .	403	Dancing Children of Harri-		Last Hours of the . . .	251
Angel Unawares . . .	592	combe. A Story . . .	492	Iviza, Sketches in . . .	31
Anonymity . . .	112	Denmark, Where the Kings of,			
"Anson," Loss of the . . .	441	Lie . . .	588	JACK-IN-THE-GREEN. . .	408
Apartments, Furnished. A		Destructive Forces . . .	196	Jordons, Mr. Penn at . . .	415
Story . . .	157	Diarics and Diarists . .	6	Joy of Work . . .	418
Ardennes, Country of the . .	184	Dinner Hour . . .	473		
"Ardent," Loss of the . . .	440	Dinner-Party, A Western .	319	KAFFIRS IN MASHONALAND.	394
Army Bands . . .	181	Dinners, Imperial . . .	235	Keeping a Diary . . .	6
Art Sales, Some famous . . .	512	Donegal Sketches . . .	447, 467	Killibegs . . .	449
Aston, Landslip at . . .	325	Downham, Landslip at . .	325	King Charles's Collection of	
Auction Sales of Works of Art .	513	Drury Lane—County Council		Works of Art . . .	512
"Avenger," Loss of the . .	443	Lodging-House . . .	277	Kingston, Earl of—Trial . .	373
Avon in April . . .	367	Dryden's Poetry . . .	316	Kirk of Field . . .	197
		Dublin Old Parliament House		Kneller Hall . . .	184
BAGENAL, MR. . . .	250	Dublin, The Old Watchmen .	240	Knife in Naples, The . . .	221, 256
Bands, Regimental . . .	181	Duelling in Ireland . . .	240	Knockers . . .	521
Bankruptcy, Court of . . .	12	Dungloe, the Road to . .	469		
Barker. A Story . . .	541	Dynamite . . .	193	"LABOUR INTERESTS" . .	204
Bashkirtseff, Marie, Diary of .	7			La Chapelle . . .	186
Battlefields, Sedan . . .	184	EAGLE AND THE CROSS. . .	303	Landslips . . .	324
Battleships Lost by Misad-		Early Reading . . .	444	Langford the Auctioneer . .	513
venture . . .	439	Earthquake at Iechia . .	221	Langton Stephen . . .	152
Beaton, Cardinal, Murder of .	153	Earth-waves . . .	324	"Lazzarone," The Italian .	258
Beaufort, Cardinal . . .	152	Ecrasite—New Explosive .	198	Lepers in Siberia . . .	132
Beauty, Aids to . . .	324	"Edgar," Loss of the . .	440	Letters, The Man of . . .	225
Beckford Sale, The . . .	515	Enemies of Tobacco . . .	55	Life in Naples . . .	221, 256
Beechen Cliffs, Bath—Landslip		Epicures, Old Roman . .	298	Lions in Mashonaland . .	395
Behind the Scenes in Paris . .	547	Epithets . . .	314	Literary Personality . . .	225
Berlin, Mar-day in . . .	402	Evelyn's Diary . . .	8	Lodgings for the Poor . . .	276
Bernal Collection, The . . .	615	"Evening Despatch" Reporter		London Dinner-Hour . . .	473
Bhogeraj Doosad . . .	205	Evil May-day . . .	402	London, Explosions in . . .	199
Bill of Union . . .	251	Explosions, Ships lost by .	440	London Eye Hospital, Visit to	251
Binks's Courtship . . .	348	Explosives . . .	196	London, In, and Out of It .	558, 584
Birds, a Wet Day among the		Eye Hospital, Visit to . .	251	Luxury of Roman Dinners .	299
Blenheim, Raphael . . .	516				
Boat-Race, After the . . .	341	FADER BEAUTY. . . .	320	MAKING OF A POLITICIAN.	200
Books of Imaginary Travels .	569	Fairyland Onwards . . .	444	Man of Letters . . .	228
Bouchier, Cardinal . . .	152	Fairy Tales, Influence of .	444	Marriage, Friendship of . .	127
Bouillon Castle . . .	134	Famous Art Sales . . .	512	Marden, Miss, and the Siberian	
"Boyne," Loss of the . . .	410	Fiction, Long and Short . .	79	Lepers . . .	132
Bread-and-Butter Miss, 209, 236,		Fire, Ships Lost by . . .	410	Marial Music . . .	181
259, 253, 307, 332		Fishing in Donegal . . .	450, 469	Maria for Works of Art . .	513
Breadtown Vixen, The . . .	503	Fitzgerald, Irish duellist .	250	"Mary Rose," Loss of the .	439
Bric-a-brac Collections . . .	512	Fleetwoods, The Home of the		Mashonaland . . .	389
British South African Company		Folk-lore, Horatian . . .	155	May-day . . .	401
Burning of the Sheas . . .	189	Fountaine Collection of Pic-		May Queen, The . . .	403
By the Avon in April . . .	367	tures . . .	516	Milton's Cottage, Chalfont .	414
		French Revolution, and Works		Misadventures, Naval . . .	439
CALIGULA, DINNERS OF	293	of Art . . .	513	Mountains of Donegal . . .	452, 468, 471
"Captain," Loss of the . . .	413	Friendship . . .	127	Municipal and Other Lodgings	
Cardinal Wolsey . . .	153	From Fairyland Onwards .	444	My Own Petard. A Story . .	421
Cardinals, Some Noted . . .	151				
Carrick . . .	450	GAMBLING AT THE BOAT-RACE.	343	NANSEN, DR.—POLAR EXPEDI-	
Castle of the Ardennes . . .	184	Gillott Collection, The . .	515	TION. . . .	15
Cattle of South Africa . . .	385	"Gloucester," Loss of the .	441	Naples and the Neapolitans .	230, 256
Centennial Exposition . . .	175	Goldfields of South Africa .	392	Naples—Lottery . . .	222
Chalfont and Milton's Cottage		Gothenburg in Winter . .	113	Naval Misadventures . . .	439

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
Neapolitan Rotten Row, Days of	256	"Resistance," Loss of the	440	Stories—continued :	
"Newcastle," Loss of the	439	Richelieu, Cardinal	154	Old Miss Pettifer	220
New Polar Quest	15	River at Chiswick	342	Outlawed, 356, 378, 404, 428,	
New York—A Night With		Roche, Sir Boyle	248	452, 476, 500, 523, 549, 572	
Roofers	57	Rocks, Ships lost on	44	Patty	12
New Zealand, Products of	41	Romance of the Irish House of		Paudheen Rhu	518
New Zealand, Progress of	40	Lords	370	Red Room	37, 61
New Zealand—Squatter Life	136	Roman Imperial Dinners	295	Sarah Tingle's Young Man	103
Night With the Roofers in New		Roman Pottery	308	Shadowed	271
York	57	Roman Silchester	304	With the Smugglers	374, 397
Nitro-Glycerine	197	Roofers in New York	57	Stories, Short and Long	79
Norse Tales—Dapplegrim	445	Rowton House, Vauxhall	278	Stowe Sale	515
North Country Birds	497	"Royal George," Loss of the	439	Strand at one o'clock	473
North Pole Expeditions, The		Rains in South Africa	391	Stratford-on-Avon	367
New	15	Russia—Emperor Assassinated	199	Strawberry Hill Sale	515
Norwegian Winter	282	Russia—old punishments of		Button Court	342
Novels, Long and Short	79	Smokers	55	Sweden, Cheap Living in	115
		Russia, The Nihilists in	189	Swedish Dinner	115
OLD IRISH PARLIAMENT	247	SAINT COLUMB	468	TOBACCO, ENEMIES OF	55
Old Miss Pettifer. A Story	220	Saint Gennaro	257	To Chalfont and Milton's	
One Man Pass, The	451	Sales of Works of Art	512	Cottage	414
One o'clock in the City	473	Sandgate, Landslip at	324	Theatre, Behind the Scenes in	
Opening of the Imperial In-		Sarah Tingle's Young Man	108	Paris	547
stitute	458	Secret Societies, Irish	189	Tourist in Donegal	447, 467
Opera. Behind the Scenes	547	Sedan Country	184	Town Life	562, 584
Orleans Collection of Works of		"Serpent," Loss of the	444	Travels, Imaginary	569
Art	518, 514	Shadowed. A Story	271	Trumpets	567
Outcast Siberian Lepers	132	Shakespeare's Stratford	367	Turks' Ancient Laws against	
Outlawed. A Story 356, 378,		Sheas, Burning of the	189	Smoking	55
404, 428, 452, 476, 500, 523, 549, 572		Shilling Novels	81	UNION, BILL OF	251
O. V.—A Western Sketch	103	Ships Aground	444	VAUXHALL—ROWTON HOUSE	278
		Ships Lost by Misadventure	439	Vesuvius	256
PALMA TO IVIZA	32	Short Stories and Long	79	Vienna, May-day in	402
Paudheen Rhu. A Story	518	Silchester	304	Visit to a London Eye Ho-pital	251
Paris—Behind the Scenes	547	Silence	279		
Paris, May-day in	402	Silence of Nature	282	WESTERN SKETCHES :	
Parliament, The Old Irish	247	Sir Cloudesley Shovel's Fleet	441	Along the Track	84
Patty. A Story	12	Sketches in Iviza	31	"Coyote Hunting"	462
Penn. Mr., Burial Place of	415	Slade, Mr., and Art Sales	514	O. V.	103
Pennsylvania, Founder of	417	Smoking, Old punishments for	55	Western Dinner-Party	819
Pepys, Samuel, Diary of	7	Sofas	582	Wet Day Among the Birds	497
Picture Sales	514	Soldiers' Bands	181	What is it to Celebrate?	175
Pictures, Prices of	518	Some Noted Cardinals	151	Where Denmark's Kings Lie	588
Poems Written in Prison	89	South African Company	392	Winter Scenes in Gothenburg	118
Polar Expedition	15	Spencer's Poetry	345	With the Smugglers. A Story	
Politician, Making of a	200	Squatter Life	136	374, 397	
Poor, Lodgings for the	278	St. Giles, Chalfont	415	Wolf, The Prairie	462
Powder and Paint	329	St. Paul's in the Dinner-hour	475	Work, The Joy of	418
Prairie Wolf, The	462	St. Mary-le-Bow Church	476	Wrecks and Misadventures in	
Prison Poetry	89	Stories:		the Navy	442
Private History of Bhogera]		Angel Unawares	592	ZIMBABWE, RUINS OF	391
Doosad	205	Apartments, Furnished	157		
"QUEEN CHARLOTTE," LOSS OF		Barker	541	POETRY.	
THE	440	Binks's Courtship	349	BARD'S SPELL	568
		Bread-and-Butter Miss, 209,		Missed Spring	205
READING, INFLUENCE OF EARLY	415	236, 259, 283, 307,	332	Patience	84
Red Room, The	37, 61	Broadtown Vixen, The	568	Prison Poetry	89
Regimental Bands	1-3	Dancing Children of Harri-		Spring in the South	131
Reporter of the "Evening De-		combe	492		
spatch"	331	My Own Petard	421		

NOTICE.

THE EXTRA SPRING NUMBER FOR 1893,

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WILL BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE VOLUME.

PART 49.

of the dress she wore; it was not such a dress as would commend itself to the fashionable woman of to-day—at that date, eighteen hundred and seventy-two, tailor-made garments for ladies were not—but it had won a glance of respect, nevertheless, from every woman in the room in the course of the few minutes which had elapsed since the wearer had entered. Her hair was fair; very plentiful and very fashionably dressed. Her eyes were blue; her colour pale. If she had had no other claims on a critic's attention, no more marked characteristics, she might have been called rather pretty. She was rather pretty, as a matter of fact, but her prettiness was dwarfed, and put out of sight by the stronger influence of her manner and expression.

As she sat there reading her letter, neither moving nor speaking, she was stamped from head to foot—as far as externals went—as one of a type of women which commands more superficial homage than perhaps any other—the woman of the world. The self-possession, the quiet, unquestioning assurance, even the superficiality of her expression in its total absence of intellectuality or emotionalism, spoke to character; the narrow character, truly, which is cognisant only of shallow waters; but which has sounded those waters, knows them, and reigns in them; and it was a noticeable feature about her that even this character had gone to the accentuation of the type in her. As to her age, it would have been extremely difficult to guess it from her appearance. Her face was quite unworn—evidently such emotions as she had known had gone by no means deep—and yet it was not young; there was too much knowledge of the world, too much “savoir-faire” about it for youthfulness. As a matter of fact, she was twenty-six years old. She was sitting alone at the little table by the window, and her perfect freedom from nervousness, or even consciousness of the admiring glances cast at her, emphasized her perfect self-possession.

A waiter, smiling and assiduous even beyond the smiling assiduity with which he had waited at other tables, appeared with her breakfast, and as he arranged it on the table, she replaced the blotted letter in its envelope with a certain lingering touch that was apparently quite unconscious, and contrasted rather oddly with her self-possessed face.

The envelope was addressed in a woman's

writing to “Mrs. William Romaine, Hôtel Florian, Nice.” It was one of a pile, and she took up the others and looked them through. They all bore the same name.

“There are no letters for Mr. Romaine!” she said to the waiter carelessly.

The voice was rather thin, and as would have been expected from her face, slightly unsympathetic, but it was refined and well modulated. Her French was excellent.

The waiter thus questioned showed a letter—a business-like looking letter in a blue envelope—which he had brought in on his tray, and presented it with a torrent of explanation and apology. It had arrived last night, before the arrival of monsieur and madame, and with unheard-of carelessness, but with quite amazing carelessness, indeed, it had been placed in a private sitting-room ordered by another English monsieur, who had arrived only this morning. By the valet of this English monsieur it had been given to the waiter this moment only; by the waiter it was now given to madame with ten million desolations that such an accident should have occurred. Monsieur had seemed so anxious for letters on his arrival! If madame would have the goodness to explain!

Madame stopped the flood of protestations with a little gesture. However it might affect monsieur the accident did not appear to disturb her greatly. Indeed, it was inconceivable that she should be easily ruffled.

“Let Mr. Romaine have the letter at once,” she said, “and send him also a cup of coffee and an English newspaper!”

The waiter signified his readiness to do her bidding with the greatest alacrity, took the letter from her with an apologetic bow, laid by her side a newspaper for madame's own reading, as he said, and retired. Left once more alone, madame proceeded to breakfast in a dainty, leisurely fashion, ignoring the newspaper for the present, and drawing from the envelope in which she had replaced the childish little epistle a second letter. It was a long one, and she read it placidly as she went on with her breakfast.

“MY DEAR HERMIA,” it ran, “Julian has just accomplished the enclosed with a great deal of pride and excitement. The wild scrawls that occur here and there were the result of imperative demands on his part to be allowed to

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE

A Weekly Journal

ROUNDS

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 210.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, JANUARY 7, 1893. PRICE TWOPENCE.

A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

"MY DEAR MAMMA,—I hope you are quite well. I am quite well, and Smut is quite well. Her tail is very fat. I hope papa is quite well. I have a box of soldiers. The captain has a horse. Uncle Richard gave them to me. There is a hole in the horse, and he sticks in tight. Auntie is quite well, and so is nurse, and so is cook.—I am, your loving Son,

"JULIAN."

It was the table d'hôte room of one of the best hotels in Nice; a large room, gay and attractive according to its kind, as fresh paint, bright decoration, and expanse of looking-glass could make it. From end to end were ranged small tables, varying in size but uniform in the radiant spotlessness of their white cloths and the brightness of their silver, china, or glass; and to and fro between the tables, and from the tables to the door, moved active waiters, whose one aim in life seemed to be the anticipation of the wishes of the visitors for whose pleasure alone they apparently existed.

It was early, and déjeuner proper was hardly in full swing as yet. But a good many of the tables were occupied notwithstanding, and a subdued hum of conversation pervaded the air; a hum compounded of the shrill chatter of the inevitable American woman, the quick, eager volubility of French tongues, backed by a less pronounced but perfectly perceptible under-

current of German and English; the whole diversified now and then by a light laugh.

The sounds were subdued because the room was large and sparsely filled, but they were gay. The smiling alacrity of the waiters was apparently at once a symptom of, and a subtle tribute to, the humour of the hour. There were sundry strongly-marked faces here and there among the little groups; middle-aged men to whom neither ambition nor care could have been empty words; middle-aged women with lines about their faces not lightly come by; young girls with the vague desire and unrest of youth; young men with its secrets and its aspirations. But all individuality of care, anxiety, or desire, seemed to be in abeyance for the time being; enjoyment—somewhat conventional, well-dressed enjoyment of the kind that rather covers up trouble as not "the thing" than disperses it—was evidently the order of the day. It was within three days of the carnival, and the visitors who were crowding into Nice came one and all with fixedly and obviously light-hearted intention.

The link between the little letter—not little by any means in a material sense, since its capitals sprawled and staggered over a large sheet of foreign letter paper—and the smart, pleasure-seeking atmosphere of the Nice table d'hôte room, was a woman who sat at a little table by one of the open windows. And she was much more easily to be identified, arguing from her appearance and manner, with her present surrounding than with the images conjured up by the blotted letter in her hand. She was a small woman, with a trim and very erect little figure, the trimness of which was accentuated by the conventional perfection

They were all well-dressed; they were all apparently in the best possible spirits, and bent upon enjoyment; and gay little laughs interspersed the chatter incessantly breaking from one or the other on little or no apparent provocation. Eventually Lady Birkett's voice detached itself and went on alone.

"We heard you were here," she said, "from a man who is staying here. We are at the *Fracas*, you know. And we said at once, 'Supposing Mrs. Romaine is not engaged for to-morrow'—so many people don't come, you see, until the day before the carnival, and consequently, of course, one has fewer friends and fewer engagements, and this week is not so full, don't you know—'supposing she has no engagement for to-morrow,' we said, 'how pleasant it would be if she would come with us to *La Turbie*.' We have to make Mr. Romaine's acquaintance, you know. So charmed to have the opportunity. I hope he is well?"

"Fairly well, thanks," replied his wife. "He has been in London all the winter—his business always seems to take him to the wrong place at the wrong time—and either the climate or his work seems to have knocked him up a little. He seems to have got into a shocking habit of sitting up all night and staying in bed all day. At least he has acted on that principle during the week we have been together. He is actually not up yet."

Mrs. Romaine smiled as she spoke; her husband's "shocking habits" apparently sat very lightly on her; in fact there was something singularly disengaged and impersonal in her manner of speaking of him altogether. Her visitor received her smile with a pretty little unmeaning laugh, and went on with much superficial eagerness:

"He may, perhaps, be up in time for our expedition though! We thought of starting in about two hours' time. They say the place is perfectly beautiful at this time of year. Perhaps you know it?"

"No," returned Mrs. Romaine. "Oddly enough I have never been to Nice before. I have often talked of wintering here, but I have always eventually gone somewhere else. Are you here for the first time?" she added, turning to the young man, whom she had received as Mr. Allan, and who evidently occupied the position of mutual acquaintance between herself and her other visitors. He was answering her in the affirmative when Lord Birkett struck in with a cheery laugh.

"He's been here two days, and he has come to the conclusion that Nice is a beastly hole, Mrs. Romaine!" he said. "This afternoon's expedition is really a device on our part for cheering him up. He let himself be persuaded into putting some money into a new bank, and the new bank has smashed. Have you seen the papers? Now, Allan hasn't lost much, fortunately; it isn't that that weighs upon him. But he is oppressed by a sense of his own imbecillity, aren't you, old fellow?"

The young man laughed, freely enough.

"Perhaps I am," he said. "So would you be, Birkett, wouldn't he, Mrs. Romaine? And don't tell me you wouldn't have done the same, because any fellow would in my place. However, if Mrs. Romaine is more likely to join us this afternoon if the proceedings are presented to her in a charitable light, I'm quite willing to pose as an object for charity. Take pity on me, Mrs. Romaine, do!"

"I shan't pity you," answered Mrs. Romaine lightly. "You don't seem to me to be much depressed, and your misfortunes appear to be of your own making. But I shall be delighted to go with you this afternoon," she continued, turning to Lady Birkett. "And I feel sure that Mr. Romaine will also be delighted."

"That is quite charming of you!" exclaimed Lady Birkett, rising as she spoke. "Well, then, I think if we were to call for you—yes, we will call for you in two hours from now. So glad you can come! The little boy quite well! So glad. In two hours, then! *Au revoir*."

There was a flutter of departure, a chorus of bright, meaningless, last words, and Mrs. Romaine stood at the head of the great staircase, waving her hand in farewell as her visitors, with a last backward glance and parting smiles and gestures, disappeared from view. She stood a moment watching some people in the hall below, whose appearance had struck her at dinner on the previous evening, and as she looked idly at them she saw a man come in—an Englishman, evidently just off a journey, and "not a gentleman" as she decided absently—and go up to a waiter who was standing in the dining-room doorway. The Englishman evidently asked a question and then another and another, and finally the waiter glanced up the stairs to where Mrs. Romaine stood carelessly watching, and obviously pointed her out to his inter-

locutor, asking a question in his turn. The Englishman, after looking quickly in Mrs. Romayne's direction, shook his head in answer and walked into the dining-room.

With a vague feeling of surprise and curiosity Mrs. Romayne turned and moved away. She retraced her steps, evidently intending to go upstairs, but as she passed the open door of the drawing-room she hesitated; her eyes caught by the bright prospect visible through the open windows which looked out over the public gardens and the blue Mediterranean; her ears caught by the sounds from the band still playing outside. She re-entered the room, crossed to the window and stood there, looking out with inattentive pleasure, the dialogue she had witnessed in the hall quite forgotten as she thought of her own affairs. She thought of the immediate prospects of the next few weeks; wholly satisfactory prospects they were to judge from her expression. She thought of the letters she had received that morning, mentally answering the invitation she had received. She thought of the acquaintances who had just left her, and of the engagement she had made for that afternoon, and then as if the necessity for seeing her husband on the subject had by this means become freshly present to her, she turned away from the window and went out of the room and up the staircase. On her way she chanced to glance down into the hall and noticed the Englishman to whom the waiter had pointed her out, leaning in a reposeful and eminently stationary attitude against the entrance. She would ask who he was, she resolved idly. She went on until she came to a door at the end of a long corridor, outside which stood a dainty little pair of walking shoes and a pair of man's boots. She glanced at them and lifted her eyebrows slightly—a characteristic gesture—and then opened the door.

It led into a little dressing-room, from which another doorway on the left led evidently into a larger room beyond. The glimpse of the latter afforded by the partly open door showed it dim and dark by contrast with the light outside; apparently the blind was but slightly raised. There was no sunshine in the dressing-room, either, though it was light enough; and as Mrs. Romayne went in and shut the door she seemed to pass into a silence that was almost oppressive. The band, the strains of which had reached her at the

very threshold, was not audible in the room; in shutting the door she seemed to shut out all external sounds, and within the room was absolute stillness.

The contrast, however, made no impression whatever upon Mrs. Romayne. She was by no means sensitive, evidently, to such subtle influence. She glanced carelessly through the doorway into the dim vista of the bedroom beyond, and going to the other end of the dressing-room knelt down by a portmanteau, and began to search in it with the uncertainty of a woman whose packing is done for her by a maid. She found what she wanted; sundry dainty adjuncts to out-of-door attire, one of which, a large lace sunshade, required a little attention. She took up an elaborate little case for work implements that lay on the table, and selected a needle and thread, and a thimble, and perhaps the dead silence about her oppressed her a little, unconsciously to herself, for she hummed as she did so a bar or two of the waltz she had shut out as she shut the door. Then with the needle moving deftly to and fro in her white, well-shaped hands, she moved down the dressing-room, and standing in the light for the sake of her work, she spoke through the doorway into the still, dark bedroom.

"The Birketts have been here, William," she said. "The people I met in Rome this winter; I think I told you, didn't I? They wanted us to go to La Turbie with them this afternoon, and I said we would. That is to say, I only answered conditionally for you, of course. Will you go?"

There was no answer, no sound of any kind. Not so much as a stir or a rustle to indicate that the sleep of the man hidden in the dimness beyond—and only sleep surely could account for his silence—was even broken by the words addressed to him. Yet the voice which proceeded from the serene, well-appointed little figure standing in the sombre light of the dressing-room, with its attention more or less given to the trivial work in its hands, was penetrating in its quality, though not loud.

Mrs. Romayne paused a moment, listening. Then, with that expressive movement of her eyebrows, she went back again to the dressing-table she had left, took up a little pair of scissors which were necessary to give the finishing touch to her work, gave that finishing touch with

careless deliberation, studied the effect with satisfaction, and then laid down the sunshade, and returned to the doorway into the bedroom. She stood on the threshold this time, and the darkness before her and the sombre light behind her seemed to meet upon her figure; the silence and stillness all about her seemed to claim even the space she occupied.

"William!" she said crisply. "William!"

Again there was no answer; no sound or stir of any sort or kind. And for the first time the silence seemed to strike her. She moved quickly forward into the dimness.

"William! Are you asleep——"

Her eyes had fallen on the bed, and she stopped suddenly. For it was empty. She paused an instant, and in that instant the silence seemed to rise and dominate the atmosphere as with a grim and mighty presence, before which everything shallow or superficial sank into insignificance. All that was typical and conventional about the woman standing in the midst of the stillness, arrested by she knew not what, suddenly seemed to stand out jarring and incongruous, as though unreality had been met and touched into self-revelation by a great reality. Then it subsided altogether, and only the simplest elements of womanhood were left—the womanhood common to the peasant and the princess—as the wife took two or three quick steps forward. She turned the corner of the bed that hid the greater part of the room from her, and then staggered back with a sharp cry. At her feet, partly dressed, there lay the figure of the man to whom she had been talking; his right hand, dropped straight by his side, clenched a revolver; his face—a handsome face probably an hour ago—was white and fixed; his eyes were glassy. On the floor beside him lay an open letter—a letter written on blue paper.

William Romayne was asleep indeed. His wife might tear at the bell-rope; the hotel servants might hurry and rush to and fro; even the recently-arrived Englishman might render his assistance. But it was all in vain. William Romayne was beyond their reach.

DIARIES AND DIARISTS.

DIARIES are in a special sense purely a product of civilisation. In the old days, when activity was more prominent than reflection, a man would have been thought a singular eccentric indeed who kept a

personal diary. Even then, however, the chroniclers in a measure played the part of diarists for the nation. There were frequent gaps in their records, even as in personal diaries occasional lapses occur which indicate forgetfulness, indisposition, or absorption in more important matters on the part of the individual. The analogy may be pushed even farther. Just as the ordinary person with a diary often makes extremely trivial and valueless entries in his little book, so the chroniclers had their moments of idiocy or vacuity, and neglected incidents of really national gravity to record this or that piece of ephemeral nonsense of no possible interest to posterity.

Even at the best, one must not pin absolute faith to the contents of the diary. No man is a hero to himself. This unpleasant, or at least enlightening truth drives itself home as soon as the man takes up his pen and looks back upon his life of the day or the week. He may resent the cold-blooded fact. Like as not, then, he tries to deceive himself, or deceives himself unconsciously. Assuming that he has done something notable during the last four-and-twenty hours, which puts money in his pocket, by a sophistical twist he may jot down a few words which make it appear that he is rather a philanthropist than a mere merchant in great deeds. This, of course, is especially so when the individual is famous, and has reason to believe that a crop of biographies will ensue upon his demise. It is so easy to find self-excuses for the little lie. One must consider one's relations, not to speak of one's posthumous reputation, which to some of us seems a mightily valuable thing. And so the man who sets his slave at liberty because he has an incurable disease may readily, from his diary, receive the veneration of his successors for his benevolence.

The average keeper of a diary begins at an early age. Precious indeed are the memoranda of the boy of sixteen or seventeen. Yet more precious are the thoughts of the girl in her teens if she be at all open in her diary confidences, and especially if she be somewhat precocious in mental development.

While I write I have by me half-a-dozen simple pocket-books with an inch or two of space for notes to each day of the year. The books recall my later schooldays and the subsequent year or two. I confess I do not feel much regard for my former self in reading these self-centred and ex-

tremely self-respecting musings and annotations.

How, indeed, should the grown man of the world be edified by thus learning how, at the age of fifteen, he "had a fight with Jones major—and licked him"? As well as I can remember him, Jones major was not a very heroic combatant. For the rest, these records are concerned with walks and birthday presents, cricket-matches, evenings on the water, and occasional dances, which last I seem to have loathed inexpressibly.

Of course, later, the diaries are of a more expansive, perhaps more interesting kind. The fair sex come in for frequent mention. "Walked from church with Mabel" is not a very informing line to the world at large; but as I think of the Mabel with whom I walked from church often and often, I might almost justify myself in falling into a mood of sentimental regret that those days cannot recur. Yet our conversation was never very remarkable.

For my part, I could regret now that I suddenly left off keeping a diary just when men and women and the world itself began really to unfold themselves to me. "Diaries are no use," I have scribbled on December the thirty-first of my last diary, and this lame excuse for my laziness contented me.

Even as a man's letters portray him, supposing he write without restraint, so his diary ought to do the same. Of course, it is possible to write Johnsonian sentences in one's diary, and raise up merely a piece of statuary instead of a human individuality; but the effort of keeping this up is so laborious that few are capable of it.

Take two very typical proofs of this in Marie Bashkirtseff and Samuel Pepys. These two individualities have nothing in common except this: that they have in their journals left us their nature embalmed for all time.

When the self-conscious—and almost self-worshipping—Marie writes a sentence like the following, we seem to have her in flesh and blood presentment again before us: "Then suddenly I took a few steps in my room, and began to weep before the glass. A few tears make me look rather beautiful, on the whole."

Poor, vain little puss! There's no knowing if her diary did not largely help to poison and give an unfortunate bias to her nature.

Few diaries contain such pathetic stuff as hers, and yet we see that she

was mortally fond of posing for her own pity.

Take the description of her little love affair with the Cardinal's nephew. She enjoyed very much indeed young Pietro's proofs of his passion, and could write down his voice as "witching," "muffled, and yet so thrilling." Here is the continuation of the interview she describes:

"Then we talked sense, and then he cast himself at my feet, crying in a choked voice that I could not love him as he loved me, it was impossible. . . .

"How I love you!" he exclaimed. 'How beautiful you are! How happy we shall be!'

"For all reply I took his head in my hands and kissed him on the forehead, on the eyes, and on the hair. I did it more for his sake than for mine."

There was a certain dignity in this episode, but she sadly detracts from it by also recording:

"It amused me to act a scene in a novel, and involuntarily I thought of Dumas."

Could the Cardinal's nephew but have seen into little Marie's diary that night, he would have obtained a vastly more genuine idea of the girl's personality than her pretty figure, her white hands of which she was so proud, and her troubled baby eyes composed for him.

As she grew older, and reached the verge of her brief span of life, her diary intimacies do not weaken, but intensify. She is an arena of baffled hopes, positive despair, and fears more or less vague and self-created. Such words as the following were for her diary alone:

"As a man I should have conquered Europe. Young girl as I was, I wasted it [her energy] in excesses of language and silly eccentricities. O misery!"

And when she learns that phthisis has laid its hard hand upon her:

"What have I done to God that He should always strike me!"

From Marie Bashkirtseff, in her diary, it is a relief to turn to the garrulous, selfish, hale and hearty, and distinctly vulgar and materialistic Samuel Pepys.

Never was man more exactly painted by himself. He was no posturer; nor was he harassed by any scruples or fears that the judgement passed upon him by those who read his diary might not be altogether complimentary.

He was just an ambitious, beef-eating Englishman of the seventeenth century, without the smallest instinct of self-

consciousness, and not at all gifted in psychological analysis. Whatever he writes, he writes plainly, without gloss, whether it relate to his wish to get his sister married, "for she grows old and ugly," or to his own financial position, after counting the gold in his boxes, and reckoning with miserly precision the value of his wife's trinkets and the household furniture.

So far from limiting the scope of his diary to himself, he models it on the chronicles of Sanudo, and those other old Venetians who have left us in their manuscripts so valuable a picture book of mediæval Venice. He has something to say about every one with whom his day's business has brought him into intercourse. When he goes to the theatre and observes my Lady Castlemaine call to one of her women for a little patch off her face, and clap it on her face, he comes home and writes down the incident in his book.

Also, when he attends church on the Sunday after the Great Fire, he does not forget to make a note of the parson's rather exceptionable reference to the City as "reduced from a large folio to a decimo-tertio." Small beer, perhaps, these and the thousand other trivialities on his pages; but they are just the minutiae which help to bring us into possible sympathetic touch with the age he lived in.

As yet stronger testimony of the difference between this old Phillistine and the subjective Marie, one quotation may be given. It relates to a domestic festival on the fourteenth of August, 1666.

"To Mrs. Mercer's, and there mighty merry, smutting one another with candle grease and soot, till most of us were like devils, and that being done, then we broke up and to my house; and there I made them drink, and upstairs we went, and then fell into dancing (W. Batelier dancing well), and dressing him and I and one Mr. Banister (who with my wife come over also with us) like women; and Mercer put on a suit of Tom's like a boy, and mighty mirth we had, and Mercer danced a jig; and Nan Wright and my wife and Pegg Pen put on perriwig. Thus we spent till three or four in the morning, mighty merry; and then parted, and to bed."

Here's vitality and vigour and thoroughness, with a vengeance! And the very parentheses and slipshod and bad grammar are but additional bones and blood in the body of the man who has thus so stoutly preserved himself more than a couple of centuries for our edification and amusement.

With the well-to-do but plebeian Samuel Pepys, Esq., another diarist of fame, John Evelyn, may well be coupled. Evelyn's diary is as convincing a photograph of John Evelyn as Pepys's diary of Pepys. It declares him the well-bred, cultured gentleman he was; and is also wonderfully informing about the events of his age.

How, for example, the following few lines transport us in a moment to the evening when they were written, when London was a mass of flames "neere two miles in length and one in breadth!"

"September the third, 1666.

"I had public prayers at home. The fire continuing, after dinner I took coach with my wife and sonn and went to the Bank side in Southwark, where we beheld the dismal spectacle, the whole City in dreadfull flames neare the water side; all the houses from the Bridge, all Thames Street, and upwards towards Cheapside, downe to the Three Cranes, were now consumed: and so returned exceedingly astonished what would become of the rest."

Nor was Evelyn averse from the most intimate whisperings with his diary, as well as making it a sort of private chronicle of the great events of the day in so far as he himself became acquainted with them. It is pleasant to learn that on the nineteenth of June, 1653, he could write thus: "This day I paid all my debts to a farthing." There is also something serene and satisfying about the following entry of August the twenty-first of the same year: "I heard that good old man, Mr. Higham, the parson of the parish of Wotton, where I was born, and who baptized me, preach after his very plaine way on Luke, comparing this troublesome world to the sea, the ministers to the fishermen, and the saints to the fish."

Mention has been made of the Venetian diarists, among whom Sanudo stands supreme. Here is a fine illustration of the value of diary-keeping. These ancients seem to have lived their lives like their contemporaries, but dailly they took up the pen and made an entry for posterity. They are now among the choicest contributors to the history of their respective epochs. The man who designs to form an idea of Venice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries must not neglect their hundreds of volumes, which are ranked—and deservedly—with the archives of the old State in the great library of the Frari.

But for their simple, unvarnished jot-

tings, we should doubt much of the evidence brought by the moderns against their ancestors for their luxury, profligacy, and the life of espionage to which they were subjected. It is only necessary to open their volumes to be convinced. When Sanudo, on October the fifth, 1507, mentions a letter having been posted in the Doge's palace, informing against three patricians, Sonanzo, Erno, and Cappello, for their contempt of the sumptuary laws, and its rejection because it bore no signature, we have valuable corroborative witness at once. And the same may be said of his day's entry of twenty-fifth May, 1509: "Certain young noblemen at the election of the new Abbess of the Convent 'la Celestia,' gave her a banquet, with trumpets and flutes, and danced all through the night with the nuns." Such evidence is worth more than the most eloquent of conjectural sentences against the Doge's city for its dissoluteness.

Upon the whole, the habit of diary-keeping does not deserve to be decried. If the diary be a veracious record of public events, it may at any rate serve as an exercise in prose-writing and précis to the writer. And on the other hand, if the diary be merely parochial, domestic, or even personal in tone, the same may be said of it, with this added qualification, that, at least in the last case, it may act in preserving a human individuality.

Among my papers and books I found the other day an old yellow-brown diary of my great-great-grandmother. Until that moment I had no more idea of the old lady than of Julius Cæsar's nurse. But when I read of her journeys to and from Bath, which she much affected, and where she "see a great deal of Company"; of her loss on Thursday, April the second, 1767, of one pound four shillings at cards; her payment on April the second of one shilling and tenpence for "face wires"—whatever they may have been; of eleven shillings on April the thirteenth for "Chare [sedan, no doubt] and Gloves"; and how, on leaving Bath on the eighteenth of April, she gave the maids ten shillings and sixpence, and the bath "servent"—she was evidently a poor hand at spelling, dear old soul!—another half-guinea; then I seem to see her dim shape assume material tone.

For your posterity's sake, therefore, if you think well of your own individuality, and also that you may get a sort of outside view of yourself, you may be counselled to keep a diary; but, for goodness' sake, do

not get hysterical in your confidences with it! If you find yourself anxiously dissecting your own nature—or trying to do so—in its pages, shut it up and have no more to do with it. Man does not live by introspection, but by action.

IN DIFFICULTIES.

WHERE once stood the quiet nooks of Clement's Inn—a refuge from the noise and bustle of the Strand, with associations that took one back to Shakespeare and Justice Shallow, and the midnight chimes of St. Clement's—has now arisen out of a chaos of hoardings and scaffoldings, the handsome façade of the new Bankruptcy Courts. All the more striking for the gloss and newness of the pile are the fragments of the once tortuous labyrinths of the alums of the Strand that are grouped about it. Gloomy archways lead into dubious-looking courts; glimpses of sunshine accentuate the sombre shadows of narrow, grimy streets. But the labyrinth is being pierced in all directions. Down, one after another, come the old houses, narrow and squalid, and yet with traces of former gentility in battered panels and carved balusters. Clare Market, once swarming like an ant-hill and hung with rags and refuse of all kinds, now lies empty and disused, although traces of the market show themselves in lines of costermongers' barrows among the neighbouring streets. Here and there some carved blazonry, some fragment of sculpture recalls the grand mansion and gardens of Hollis and Pelham; of princely Clare; and of that solid, sagacious Duke of Newcastle, who gave his name to the street that was once more picturesque and familiar as Maypole Alley.

Yet even by the usual approach to Bankruptcy Buildings from the solemn respectability of Lincoln's Inn, there are fragments of the older world still surviving, but probably doomed to speedy destruction. The "Old Black Jack," with its sombre brick frontage, came into existence not later than the days of the Merry Monarch, and was a house of call for the jovial players from the Duke's Theatre in Portugal Street, close by, among whom was that famous Joe Miller, whose grave is now covered by King's College Hospital. A later customer was bold Jack Sheppard, and tradition points out the window through which he leaped to escape the officers of the law.

Only a few weeks ago and there was ale still flowing at the "Black Jack," drawers ran to and fro, and the blackened panels were still marked with ale scores; but to-day the old house is closed, the "Black Jack" is finally drained dry, and only the ghosts of the roystering blades who once frequented it will be found to bewail its disappearance.

There are fragments, too, here and there, even within sight of Bankruptcy Buildings, dark gables frowning over squalid courts, which even now wear an aspect of almost ferocious gloom, as if blackened with crime and tainted with midnight murders. And yet the neighbourhood, although fertile in sudden frays, and rife with shootings and knifings on occasion, should not be classed as criminal. Costermongers, flower-girls, porters, and others connected with the London markets—classes, like the rest of the world, indifferent honest—form the chief elements of the population. And lawyers with their bags; clerks and messengers; debtors, singing on their way with the light-heartedness of those who have nothing to lose; creditors, weighed down with a load of care, all these thread safely and swiftly the mazes between Drury Lane and Clement's Inn, where once the well-dressed stranger was looked upon as lawful prey. And before many years are over a new boulevard will sweep away all this sordid mass of buildings, and smart shops, huge flats, and nests of offices will replace the fallen rookeries.

But it is not from this side of the town that the main river of traffic sets in for Bankruptcy Buildings. Stand at the Carey Street entrance, looking upon what may be called the back front of the Law Courts, where the judges arrive in their carriages, or perhaps simply strolling along like ordinary men, and, even in full term, where the legal stream sets in with its utmost force, you will find that a goodly portion of that stream runs on to Bankruptcy Buildings. And even in vacation time, when the whole gloomy area of the Courts of Law is almost deserted, the rill of bankruptcy is still running on with little diminished volume.

In comes the flowing tide of men as at the stroke of the clock the Courts open for the day. Lawyers, clients, debtors, creditors, clerks, accountants, all stream in pell-mell—a lively, cheerful, chatty kind of crowd, not at all affected by the somewhat melancholy nature of the business in

which they are concerned. Papers there are in profusion; everybody has a bundle of his own, and bags full of them are squeezed in between the ever-swinging doors.

Once within the swing-doors of the building, the impression of activity is confirmed by the busy hum of voices and clatter of footsteps resounding from one end to the other of the long corridor, which runs from end to end of the building, with one entrance in Carey Street and the other in what was once Clement's Inn. It is the Rialto of bankruptcy, the "Merchants' Walk" of those who deal in "judgements," "summonses," and "receiving orders." Impromptu meetings are held in this fine corridor, proposals are discussed, arrangements sometimes made.

For all the world connected with bankruptcy, in fact, this wide echoing corridor affords sufficient accommodation, while the rooms opening out on either hand seem to be excellently adapted for their purposes. Here swarm lawyers' clerks, taking out summonses, filing affidavits, and generally setting the mill of bankruptcy to work. In another room debtors may be at work compiling their schedules, an occupation deemed in all civilised climes the most wretched in which one can be employed. Here are others searching the files, and others perusing the notes of debtors' examinations. Everything is neat and new; there are parqueted floors, tessellated pavements, and desks and inkstands of the latest pattern. Old stagers remember stuffy Basinghall Street, and the crowded dens of Portugal Street, and hold up their hands in amazement at all this space and comfort.

While private debtors are dismembered on the ground floor, public companies are dissected above. Broad staircases lead to other corridors above with fine rooms adapted for meetings of all kinds connected with the winding-up of companies, a process which arouses feelings less painful than individual ruin, but which is often still more disastrous in its consequences, in the form of broken-up households and ruined families.

Again we are moving along the Rialto, among the changing crowd, where now appears here and there the gleam of some barrister's wig, as he pushes his way from one Court to another. And now there is the flutter of an usher's gown, as that functionary calls out in an unexpected way: "Louisa Priggins, Louisa Priggins!" No one answers to that appeal. There are one

or two ladies in the assembly, but their faces betray no evidence that the name is a familiar one. Following the usher into the Court, it may be number one, or two, or three, we find ourselves in the midst of the business that is going on. Everything is neat and plain in the new Court. The Registrar in a bar wig and gown, sits beneath the judicial canopy. There are rows of benches for counsel, for solicitors, for creditors and their representatives, and on either hand of the judge is a little enclosure that may be considered in the light of a witness-box, a prisoner's dock, or a confessional. It is here, anyhow, that the debtor undergoes the "peine forte et dure" of a public examination. Close to the debtor's side is a respectable kind of pew—a churchwarden's pew it may be called, occupied by the official receiver or his deputy—perhaps an amiable and bland-looking official; but depend upon it he has thumbscrews and torturing irons beneath his desk, and the clerks behind him who supply him with sheaves of papers, are so many familiars of the Grand Inquisitor, and help to work the rack on occasion.

But just now the receiver is "mentioning" the case of Louisa Priggins, who has failed to appear for her public examination, and who, it seems, has continually failed to appear, and now his honour the Registrar is appealed to say what shall be the fate of the unfortunate Louisa. "It will have to be 'sine die'—yes, decidedly 'sine die,'" pronounces the presiding official firmly. The decree has not a formidable sound. "Good your honour, may we all be postponed 'sine die' from such a doleful appearance," might be the petition of a disinterested bystander.

The witness-box is not long empty, for there is a good store of debtors on hand who have to make their appearance, and the new-comer somehow introduces a more cheerful air into the proceedings. There is little to be gleaned in the maze of bills and renewals, and the receiver passing from that part of the question, briskly asks, "How is it that you have so many tailors' bills?" "Weren't they all botherin' me out of my life for me custom?" replies the debtor with a twinkle of the eyes towards the back benches, occupied, perhaps, by a row of the tailors in question, calculated to disarm any injured feelings on their part. "Now, when you borrowed this fifty pounds, did you not know that you were insolvent?"

is the next question. "And how was I to know that?" asks the debtor with an expression of bewildered innocence. "Come," interposes the Registrar mildly, "could you have paid your debts?" "Wasn't that what I was borrowing the money for?" rejoins the witness triumphantly. And the Court gives him up with a smile.

As no hostile creditor appears, there is probably an arrangement in prospect, and the gallant captain goes down, without having ruffled a feather, while the usher smilingly presents him with his "testamur" as having passed the schools of bankruptcy, a paper which he pockets with an air as if it were a patent of nobility.

Then there is a flutter in the legal dovecote. The Court is suddenly filled; wigs and gowns appear in the barristers' row, and the solicitors' bench is all of a flutter with blue papers. Is all this disturbance about that quiet, depressed-looking man who is perplexedly smoothing the forelock that time has had the complaisance to leave him, and who turns out to be a milk dealer in difficulties arising from his customers running away without paying his score, and from boys running off with the matutinal milk-cans?

No, this is no affair of milk-cans; for here is a learned brother who rises and asks for an adjournment in the case of Croesus and Company, the liabilities being somewhere about a million. "You think it will be as much as a million?" asks the Registrar pleasantly. "Quite that," replies another wig from a different part of the Court, and there is a general wagging of wigs, satisfied at the prospect of being in it, and an excited flutter of papers among the solicitors. For there are still wealthy people among the Croesuses who will see that the last obsequies of the old firm are decently celebrated. And Jack Croesus, who has brought the concern to grief by reckless driving of the Newmarket, Ascot, Goodwood and Company fashion, married a girl with a hundred thousand to her fortune, and a handsome mail phaeton is at this moment waiting for him at the corner of Lincoln's Inn.

And now attention is turned to the milk-dealer, whose affairs do not present much interest except to that bluff, ruddy-looking man in drab coat and gaiters, who is leaning against the seats and makes them crack with his pressure. His thoughts are far away: he sees the early morning sights of the farm, the cows clustered by the gate, the steaming milk-pails. "So

many good barn gallons every morning, so much toil and so much care, and a shilling in the pound for it all!" mutters the stout farmer, who has seen his milk disappear in profitless streams along London streets. "Any creditors present?" is asked. "Yes," cries the farmer, straightening himself out. "I am." "Any questions to ask?" His features work as if he had it in his mind to say a good deal, but after a pause he thumps out a sonorous "no," and the nervous milk-dealer departs with his testamur.

Then the stage is occupied by a lady in deep mourning, one who has evidently long enjoyed the comfort and consideration of one in easy circumstances, and of assured position, an excellent manager, a pleasing hostess, but knowing no more than a child of the tangled affairs from which all her wants had been so long supplied and with such unflinching regularity. And then with a husband's death everything breaks down beneath her, and she is plunged into the cold waters of bankruptcy.

"Yes, they have taken away my furniture—everything—I have nothing!" says the widow with a gesture of despair. "No securities, jewels, bonds, or notes?" She smiles bitterly as she repeats: "I have nothing!" The poor woman is treated with consideration and kindness by the court, but now is the turn of the creditors. It is a necessary thing perhaps to be done, but it is torture nevertheless. For what can be more forlorn and miserable than the position of a debtor under public examination? All the acts of a life may be questioned, all its secrets laid bare; nothing is deemed irrelevant in the case of a debtor, who is protected by no immunities in his avowals. The old laws of bankruptcy were cruel enough. The early Roman law divided the very body of a debtor among his creditors. The ordinances of the Parliament of Paris in the sixteenth century pronounced the pain of death against bankrupts, and that of Lyons condemned them to perpetual imprisonment. But although our present laws are more humane, they still can be made to produce a considerable amount of suffering for unfortunate debtors, without producing much benefit for, perhaps, as unfortunate creditors.

Still again and again the box is filled as the day goes on. Now it is a fashionable lady who brings quite a flutter of French millinery into Court, and

who ascribes her entangled circumstances to losses at Monte Carlo. One gentleman appears accompanied by warders from a convict prison, and there is a call for another who is taking his trial at the Old Bailey. Then there is the fashionable solicitor who has led many clients gaily through the Court, but who now has come himself to the same complexion. Doctors, too, appear in their turn and are themselves sounded and examined by legal stethoscopes. In fine, all trades and all professions yield to the universal law of bankruptcy. There is no antidote against it. Here is one who has spent his days in care and trouble; he has fought a losing fight with adversity, has fought too long in fact, and staved off bankruptcy with too fierce determination, and so committed one of those faults which postpone the debtor's certificate, or perhaps cause him to be adjourned "sine die." Another who has lived gaily and freely on the proceeds of rash and hazardous speculations, now that fortune has deserted him comes to the Court, to free his arms for another dive into the speculative sea.

And of all these here, few will receive that highest honour that the Bankruptcy Court can give, a certificate, that is, that the bankruptcy has been caused by unavoidable loss or misfortune. And without this the bankrupt, even though his liabilities are swept away, may not sit or vote in the House of Lords or Commons, act as Justice of the Peace, Alderman, Councillor, Guardian of the poor, or indeed as local Don of any denomination.

But the Bankruptcy Court is about to close for the day, suitors, debtors, creditors issue forth pell-mell and mingle with the other crowds that pour forth from the other temples of the law, soon to disappear in the greater throng that is whirling through the crowded streets.

PATTY.

A SKETCH.

SHE was a little maidservant, and she afforded me many opportunities for studying the human mind in its original chaotic condition. It was a problem to me how such an anomaly as Patty could exist in the present day, when education is compulsory, and the Free Education Bill is in force. Patty was unable to write, and her reading powers were limited to distinguishing the letters and easy words.

She had been brought up in an out-of-the-way little village, miles from the school.

She didn't never go in wintertime, and mother wanted her to mind baby in the summer, and when father cum to town to try and get work. Patty declared further she thought she was quite big, though she was only going in eleven, and the School Board man never bothered his 'ed about her.

So Patty went to service to an old woman who had asthma "awful bad, and was that bad - tempered, there was no getting on with her."

Patty had been to various places, and had various experiences before I became acquainted with her. She was fifteen when I knew her, and was developing a taste for dress, and a longing for hats with "big roses in 'em."

She was a very sage person, and her reflections upon mankind were occasionally delightful. One day she remarked with doleful head-shakings that "the world were full of fools; most everybody was fools in these days."

I wished to ascertain by what process of reasoning she had arrived at so sweeping a condemnation of mankind. Therefore I enquired why she considered that the world was full of fools. Patty deliberated and replied slowly that "mother said so."

Patty respected her mother, and looked upon her as an epitome of wisdom and erudition. This worthy woman could read, and "mek figures, and keep father's accounts when he 'ad any to keep."

But Patty looked upon her father as rather a bad specimen in the vast category of fools. I was interested in Patty's father. By trade he was a sawyer, but it appeared that he could only do a particular kind of sawing, and that particular sawing seemed to be going out of fashion, so he seldom had work.

Patty's mother was a good Church-woman, and Patty professed staunch adherence to her mother's religion; but she certainly did not "honour her father," though I ascertained that she knew most of the Commandments except the second and the fourth. "They wus too long to learn," she remarked, with evident disapproval of long Commandments.

Patty often went about her work with a gloomy frown, "'Cause father's 'ad no work this week," she would explain, when questioned as to her trouble.

When I suggested that he should try for something else besides his own rarely re-

quired sawing, Patty would shake her head, and reply:

"Nobody 'ud have he; he ain't no good."

I knew that unskilled labour was often needed in a neighbouring biscuit factory, and I remarked that he might find employment at the factory.

Patty sighed dolefully, and said decidedly:

"He don't know no more 'bout biscuits than the dog."

"But he might learn," I persisted.

"He can't learn nothink no more than a Tom-cat," pronounced Patty, and she proceeded to make good her statement by telling me about the time "when father was laid up with rheumatics awful." He came home "froze one night, when he had been sawing five miles off, and he walked through the frost, and his clothes was all froze to him, and 'ad to be took off with hot water to melt them." A district lady called to see him, and presented him with an A B C book, "all with big red letters, as easy as could be, and apples, and bulls, and cats to make it easier."

To wile away his painful hours, his children were to teach him his alphabet. The sequel ought to have been a charming tableau of the thankful man when convalescent reading his Bible; but it wasn't.

"He couldn't learn nothink," went on Patty, "so he swore, and throwed the book on the fire, after the lady was gone. He 'ud rather 'ad a pipe of baccy," concluded Patty gloomily, shaking her head over her parent's natural depravity of taste.

But this district lady was hopeful, and she made further efforts to amuse the poor man. She brought him some rags, "red rags, and blue 'uns, and grey 'uns, all cut up, and she tried to teach him how to make rag mats."

But he was very hard to amuse this father of Patty's, for "he swore at the rag mats, and wouldn't make 'em, so me and mother did. He 'ud rather 'ad a pint of beer," finished Patty, sighing over the hopelessness of her father.

The wickedness of the world sometimes troubled Patty. She "can't abide the goings on there is; the world is ever so much wuss this last two or three years than what it used to be." I was curious on the matter, and begged her to explain.

"Folks don't go to church," she grumbled; "they goes after the Salvation Army, and makes mock a-playing musics through the streets."

"But, Patty," I argued, "why should they not? So far as I know, they go about the golden streets and play music in heaven."

"Then folks should wait till they get here, and play their music here proper on church organ," she contended, and I was silenced.

Patty's sole idea of righteousness is good temper. "Folks what is good-tempered will all be angels," she declared.

"What is an angel?" I enquired.

"A woman in a white gown," she answered readily.

"And if I were to put on a white gown," pursued, bent on acquiring information, should I be an angel?"

Patty deliberated, and replied:

"Not till you be dead, miss."

"But, Patty," I argued, "are all angels women?"

Patty thought so; she "had never eered tell of men angels." She supposes men ain't fit to be angels.

Patty has come to the conclusion "as this world ain't worth living in," but she consoles herself with the reflection "that it in't for long, and as you gets older the time on slips by."

Patty's philosophy and theology are of a muted description.

"There ain't more than one world; it says so in the Bible. God made one world, and then He put the stars in the sky."

I asked her what the stars were, and she said "little lights as big as a lamp," she would think. The sun and moon were bigger lights, perhaps as big as a fire.

I asked her where the Bible came from, trying to elicit her knowledge on Jewish history. She answered that she "spected some of them printers a-printed it."

Patty says there is a world above the clouds where it is "light and nice," and we shall go there if we "don't tell lies and eat." The other world is "underneath the ground," "long with the devil," and Patty's voice sank to an awful whisper.

Patty has not been confirmed; she sees no good in it. "Them as bees confirmed in't none better; they swears and tells us just the same." Patty says she "can seep from a-telling lies and a-thieving without being confirmed."

Patty's political opinions are hazy.

"What is your opinion, Patty, of the present state of Ireland?" I asked her one day when she was amusing herself by telling through a newspaper.

Patty looked puzzled and replied:

"I don't know as I knows him, miss."

"Do you know who Mr. Gladstone is?" I asked her once.

"He is one of them men as you talks of," she replied with pride.

Once I read Shakespeare to Patty. It was just before she went to bed. I called her in and read scenes from "Macbeth" and "King John." Patty was fascinated, and regarded Shakespeare's works with admiration, and dusted them with reverence ever after. She informed me one day that she liked "Shakespeare's books."

"What are they about, Patty?" I asked.

"About them burning they eyes out with a hot poker, and put on your nightgown, there is knocking at the gate," she replied quickly, and from this I gathered that the Hubert and Arthur scene and the murder scene in "Macbeth" yet lingered in her memory.

At Christmas time I occasionally read fairy tales to Patty. She had never heard of a fairy; but was quite familiar with the subject of ghosts, and she seemed to think the two terms synonymous.

"Have you ever seen a ghost?" I asked, astonished at her intelligence on the point.

"No, miss; but mother have. It was soon after she were married, when she used to go walks 'long with father."

"Doesn't she go walks with him now?" I enquired.

"No, miss; folks never goes walks as have bin married long. They was going down a lane, and mother sees a woman with a frock on like a servant's—light cotton it was like—but when she come near, she saw it was a ghost."

"How did she know?" I asked.

"It was all a skeleton like," said Patty vaguely; "all ghosts is skeletons."

"And what is a skeleton, Patty?"

"A spirit a-walking," replied Patty. "But mother was so frightened at that ghost that she never walked in the lane again."

"What did your father say?"

"He never seed nothink; but it is all accordin' to the star you was born under; and father wasn't born under stars what sees ghosts, and mother was," concluded Patty as a further proof of her mother's superiority in all things.

I read Hans Andersen's tales to Patty. She did not think much of the "Snow Man"; but the "Red Shoes" and the "Tin Soldier" pleased her. She liked

"*Oliver Twist*" better than fairy tales, and remarked:

"Them's the things they does to you in the work'us. Mother 'ad never let us go in."

But Patty preferred Shakespeare to all other tales or stories until I bought the Christmas number of "*Ally Sloper*" and presented it to her. She sat and grinned over it for two hours. She liked "*Ally Sloper*" "better than anythink," and she thought that the pictures of the man who got drunk and lost his goose were infinitely finer than the story of Hubert and Arthur, or "*Macbeth*." So Shakespeare was dethroned just when I was deciding that Shakespeare appealed to the most untutored mind. She wanted to know if *Ally Sloper* were a real man; and I replied that I thought so. She asked if I had ever seen him, and I was able to answer "Yes"; for I saw the whole *Sloper* family at the Henley Regatta. She sighed, and hoped she should see them some day; and further remarked, "they wus a funny-looking family, and 'ad such big feet," she shouldn't like to clean their boots.

Patty presented her father with the "*Sloper Christmas Number*," and he sat for hours over it. "He liked it," she said, but he thought the "old man got drunk." I replied that I believed he was not a teetotaler. Evidently the *Sloper* number did not share the same fate as the *A B C* book.

It rather troubled me to think that it was impossible to cultivate the taste of the masses for literature when "*Slopers*" stood in the way. But the masses don't want to be cultivated. They read their "*Slopers*" and are happy.

Poor Patty! She has left us now, and is thinking of entering into another experience of life. She is engaged to marry a Salvation Army Captain, and she is a most devoted hallelujah lass.

THE NEW POLAR QUEST.

WHY do men desire to reach the North Pole? One reason, of course, is because no man has been there—unless we except the marvellous Captain Hatteras, of Jules Verne's story, and reject the once popular theory that when the Polar apex is reached, it will be found to be occupied by a Scotchman turning a Newcastle grindstone.

Another reason is because great glory

will fall to the lot of him who solves the problem which has baffled centuries of geographers and navigators. And another reason is that the work of exploration must go on so long as there is a corner of the world unexplored, and that the spirit of human enterprise must find exercise somewhere.

But the real reasons are more sober, and in fact are purely scientific. As the two extremities of the globe are two regions which have hitherto remained isolated from science, the more science has advanced elsewhere the more necessary is it to penetrate the mystery of these Polar regions.

We do not want to enter the northern area of ice in order to find a north-west passage to India, as Sir John Franklin hoped, because we know now that such a north-west passage would be useless for modern traffic, even if it existed, while we have much better routes to the east. Nor do we need to go in search of a north-east passage, for Baron Nordenfjöld has demonstrated the practicability, if not the desirability—from a commercial point of view—of a voyage by way of the north of Europe and Behring Straits to Japan. Nor is it so necessary to arrive at the actual summit of the mathematical Poles themselves as it once was thought. It is the regions immediately surrounding them—but especially the northern area—in which scientific light will be found, for it is only there that actual observations can be taken on certain points on which depend the answers to many important questions in meteorology, climatology, geology, zoology, and physical geography. The questions of air-currents and ocean-currents, for instance, must remain in a more or less hypothetical stage, until circumpolar observations have been verified.

It would hardly suit the pages of this journal to enter upon a more minute explanation of the practical necessity for Polar research, and all we want to do at the outset is to make it understood that expeditions to the Arctic are not the mere useless and foolhardy enterprises that some people seem to regard them.

The scientific value of the North Pole is, of course, immeasurably superior to that of the South Pole, and Antarctic research may well enough wait upon Arctic achievement. And as regards the North Pole, it may be said that the chief interest

and importance lie not in the mere arrival at the goal, but in the method of getting there and back again, and in the observations by the way.

Dr. Nansen, for instance, does not care a great deal whether he reaches the actual Polar apex or not; what he is bent upon, and is deliberately preparing to sacrifice his life, if need be, in attempting, is to cross the North Polar area in a manner which we propose to explain.

Dr. Fridtjof Nansen has already won his spurs in the great battle with the Frost King, and his wonderful journey on snow-shoes across Greenland a few years ago has already given him fame. Yet he is young—hardly more than thirty or thirty-one years of age—a typical Scandinavian, of stalwart frame and fine physique; and he proposes to take the absolute command of a selected body of twelve scientists and sailors in one of the most daring adventures in the history of human effort.

Dr. Nansen proposes to utilise the experience of previous expeditions, from which he derives certain important conclusions. Thus, nearly all the expeditions towards the North Pole have been stopped less by ice than by currents from the north carrying down immense masses, or "flocs." It is true that Sir George Nares, the leader of the last British expedition, found his advance to the north barred by what appears to be permanent ice—a palæocrystic sea, as it is called—which seems to stop further exploration by way of Smith Sound.

Captain Markham, a member of the same expedition, has declared that it would be highly unwise and imprudent for any commander to risk the safety of his ship in attempting to navigate amongst the enormous ice-flocs which Sir George Nares has reported; Lieutenant Peary, of the U. S. Navy, in his recent remarkable overland journey to the north of Greenland, saw what appears to be a stretch of unbroken ice on the waters to the north of that island.

This was last year, and it serves to recall what Captain Markham wrote several years ago about the Smith Sound route—that it has been definitely proved that the land in that direction terminates in about eighty-three degrees north latitude, heading away on either side of this to the south-east and south-west, with nothing apparently to the northward but a boundless and illimitable frozen ocean.

But not a motionless one. The "drift of

the pack" has always been the main obstacle in sledging, after navigation became impossible. Sir Edward Parry's expedition now seems ancient history, but the incidents of it are recalled by Dr. Nansen's scheme. After leaving his ship at the north of Spitzbergen, Parry started over the ice towards the Pole with sledges. After superhuman exertions, Parry records at the end of a month's sledging: "We halted at seven a.m.—twentieth of July, 1827—having by our reckoning accomplished six miles and a half in a N.N.W. direction, the distance traversed being ten miles and a half. It may therefore be imagined how great was our mortification in finding that our latitude, by observation at noon, was only eighty-two degrees thirty-six minutes fifty-two seconds, being less than five miles to the northward of our place at noon on the seventeenth, since which time we had certainly travelled twelve miles in that direction."

That is to say, the southward drift cut off nearly one half of the northward advance. Later it got worse, for on the twenty-sixth of the same month Parry wrote: "Since our last observation we had lost by drift no less than thirteen miles and a half; for we were now more than three miles to the southward of that observation, though we had certainly travelled between ten and eleven due north in this interval. Thus it appeared that for the last five days we had been struggling against a southerly drift exceeding four miles per day." When it was found useless to prolong the struggle, and a return journey to the ship was ordered, the party covered in fifteen days, coming south, the distance which had occupied thirty-three days of tremendous toil going north. Such was the difference made by the current.

We might give many instances of the same character from other Polar records, but have selected Parry's as typical. They establish the indisputable fact of one or more currents constantly flowing out of the Polar area in a southerly direction. The most important of these currents is that which runs southward along the east coast of Greenland, at a considerable speed, and which practically fills up the whole sea-gap between Greenland and Spitzbergen. It is a current of immense volume traversing an ocean-bed of enormous depth, and it is computed that it must bring down from the Polar circle to the Atlantic Ocean from eighty to one hundred and twenty cubic miles of water every day.

Now this immense outward drain presupposes an equivalent inward drain somewhere. The water does not originate at the Pole, and if it flows out of the Polar basin in one direction to the south, it must flow into it in another direction from the south. This is the conclusion upon which Dr. Nansen bases his plan of action, and his design is thus, in brief, to catch the northward-flowing current and drift with it up into the Polar basin, across the Polar area, and out again with the southward-flowing current.

It seems simple and reasonable, although it is denounced as impracticable by Sir George Nares and other Arctic travellers who have followed other lines of exploration. But what about the northward current? Well, happily, that is not merely hypothetical, however logical, but is a well-ascertained fact—to a certain extent, at any rate. Experience has shown that while vessels caught in the ice on what we may call the Greenland side of the Pole are invariably carried southward, however slowly, the reverse is the case on what we may call the American side of the Pole. Many vessels which have gone whaling to the north of Behring Straits, and have been caught in the ice, have disappeared to the north. To what high latitudes they do drift we know not, for they never return. One branch of the Gulf Stream runs north along the west coast of Spitzbergen, and another branch runs north between Norway and Novaya Zemlya. But the most important current flowing northward into the Polar Sea is that which runs up from Behring Straits.

It is upon the experience of the "Jeannette," in 1879, that Dr. Nansen largely relies. This was the vessel sent out by the American Government under the gallant and ill-fated Lieutenant De Long. Soon after getting through the Straits, the "Jeannette" was caught in the ice at about seventy-one degrees thirty minutes north latitude, and one hundred and seventy-five degrees west longitude. She drifted towards the north and north-west—a somewhat irregular course affected by the winds for some months, and thereafter for several months a steady course to the north-west at the rate of about two miles a day, until, on June thirteenth, 1881, she was crushed in the ice and sank. This was just north of the New Siberia Islands, in latitude seventy-seven degrees fifteen minutes north, and longitude one hundred and fifty-six degrees east. The crew

made for the mainland, but poor De Long and some others succumbed to the hardships of the Siberian tundras.

Now this drift of the "Jeannette" proves clearly a north-west current from the north end of Behring Straits, although only up to the New Siberia Islands. But at the time she sank her progress had increased and was then at the rate of about eight miles a day. Three years after she sank a number of articles belonging to her and her crew were found on an ice-floe near Julianshaab, on the south-east coast of Greenland. There is no doubt about the identity of these relics, but some people doubt whether they drifted, and incline to believe that they were brought by Eskimos from the scene of the wreck of the "Jeannette." Dr. Nansen, however, is convinced that they drifted on the ice-floe, and by the shortest and only possible route, viz., by the north of Franz Josef Land, and, therefore, right across the Polar region. The floe could not have gone any other way without meeting the branch of the Gulf Stream above referred to, in the warm waters of which the ice would have melted in less than three years. Moreover, it is argued that only by the most direct route could the distance have been traversed in the time.

While the voyage of the "Jeannette" and of her relics clearly prove to Dr. Nansen's mind the existence of a current right across the Polar area, he has other and later, and even better evidence; for instance, a harpoon handle was found some years ago near Godthaab, in Greenland, and was sent by Dr. Rink to the museum at Christiania as a curiosity of unexplained origin. It has now been identified with the "throwing sticks," used in northern Alaska and nowhere else, and it is, moreover, ornamented with the Chinese glass beads which the Alaskan Eskimos get from the Asiatic side of Behring Strait. Again, when he was in Greenland, Dr. Nansen collected samples of dust and mud from the ice-floes, the analyses of which, by experts, reveal the presence of mineral matter not to be found in Greenland, and of organic matter which must have come out of the Siberian rivers.

Dr. Nansen, then, proposes to utilise this current—to take a ticket with the ice, as he expresses it—and to float with the floe across the Polar regions from the sea north of Siberia and Behring Straits by the north of Franz Josef Land into

the sea between Spitzbergen and Greenland, returning with the immense southward-setting current which we have described above.

But how will he travel? In a very remarkable vessel, which he has had built specially for the voyage to his own designs.

The "Fram," as she is called—and "fram" means "forward"—is in contour more like a Dutch cheese than an ocean liner. She is the reverse of clipper-built, but is rounded everywhere, of a semi-circular build, almost like a big hollow U. The idea is that instead of being nipped between two ice-floes she will gently slide up on to the top of the ice when the pressure comes on her sides. Her bottom being a rounded flat, so to speak, instead of an ordinary keel, will rest firmly on the ice and will not allow the "Fram" to topple over, as a vessel of ordinary build must when aground. She is built very strong, almost entirely of oak, her sides where pressure may be expected being from thirty to thirty-two inches thick. On the outside of the hull is a coating of "ice-sheathing," viz., a thick layer of American greenheart, a hard wood with an oily, slippery surface. She is one hundred and twenty-five feet long, and will be able to carry about eight hundred tons dead-weight.

This curious vessel is calculated to be just big enough to carry provisions for twelve men for five or six years, and the necessary fuel for her engines, etc. These engines are of one hundred and sixty indicated horse-power, to give her a speed of six knots with a consumption of two and three-quarter tons of coal per day, but she will sail as much as possible in order to economise fuel, and with her sails in a favourable wind is expected to make eight or nine knots.

She is not designed for speed, but for endurance, as after the first few months her movements will not depend on her own powers, but on the currents. She will have enough power, however, with her peculiar shape, to force her way with comparative ease through pack-ice. The fault of most ships hitherto sent into the Arctic is that they have been almost straight-sided, as the result of the precautions taken to secure strength, and thus were readily nipped by the floes and held tight. The "Fram" will be as slippery as an eel among the floes, but as steady as a rock on top of them; and as great length is a

disadvantage in meeting the twisting and turning of the ice, the "Fram" is so proportioned that her breadth is about one-third of her length. She has no sharp edges anywhere, and is pointed and curved at both ends, like the fishing boats with which many of us are familiar—with considerable slope of stem to force the ice under. Internally she is divided into three compartments by water-tight wooden bulkheads, so that if she springs a leak in one she will be kept afloat by the others, while a large centrifugal pump communicates with each of the compartments, and is driven by the engine. For living accommodation she has a general saloon and six cabins, all fitted up in the way usual among vessels voyaging to the Arctic. Her rig is that of a three-masted fore-and-aft schooner, with the sails so arranged that they can be easily handled from the deck—an important matter with a small crew not all of whom are practical seamen. That crew will include a couple of engineers, five or six regular sailors, two or three ice-pilots and experienced harpooners, and the rest scientific men more or less accustomed to a seafaring life, and able to share in the hard work of the expedition.

With this ship Dr. Nansen proposes to leave Norway in June next. He will sail direct to Novaya Zemlya, and make a stop there to revictual and examine the state of the ice. As soon as the ice allows, probably early in July, he will leave for the Kara Sea, and skirting the Siberian coast, and rounding Cape Chelyuskin—the most northerly point of the Old World—will reach the mouth of the Lena River. There he will leave the coast, and taking a northerly course for the New Siberia Islands, will continue to steam north as long as the pack-ice will allow.* As soon as navigation becomes impossible—probably in September next, and some distance to the north of the islands—the ship will be rammed into the ice as far as possible, and brought to rest on the floe.

After that, Nature will have to do the rest, while the gallant band await their fate, and occupy their time in making scientific observations. The progress is expected to be still northwards, but at the

* Since these lines were written, it has been arranged to send a yacht as friendly convoy of the "Fram" as far as the New Siberia Islands. The yacht will carry additional supplies of provisions and fuel, with which to replenish Dr. Nansen's stores before he plunges into the icy circle.

mercy and pleasure of the current, which Dr. Nansen believes will carry the ice-floe, with the ship upon it, right across the Pole and down into the East Greenland Sea, where the warmer waters melting the ice will enable the "Fram" to drop quietly again into her native element. This drift of the ice-raft may probably occupy a period of five years—of absolute isolation from man, out of reach of all succour, and beyond the possibility of retracing their steps. For whether Dr. Nansen be right or wrong in his theory of the continuity of the Polar current, this much is certain, that once the ship is in the drift she will never be able to get back the way she went; once on the ice she must go with the ice.

But supposing the "Fram" does not rise superior to the Ice King, and becomes crushed in spite of all precautions, what then? Why, then Dr. Nansen has other plans. He will have with him two big boats with flat bottoms, decked, and high enough to afford comfortable shelter. He will place these boats side by side on the ice, cover them with thick, warm material taken for the purpose, and coat them with snow. In these boat-houses on the ice-raft he will continue the journey.

Suppose there is not open water round the Pole, but a hitherto unknown land? Then they will endeavour to find some side-current to drift them away again, but, if hopelessly grounded, will abandon ship and boats, and, with light sledges to carry provisions and canvas for boat-making, will tramp over the ice until they reach open water again, make canvas or sealskin boats, and once more launch themselves into the current, which must carry them somewhere.

It appears to us that Dr. Nansen leaves out of account two possibilities—the counter effect of the winds upon the currents, and the existence of a perfect pack of ice round the Pole, under which the currents may course as supposed, but without moving the ice-raft on which the ship is anchored.

Indeed, the whole enterprise is fraught with awful possibilities, for it is without precedent, and is a plunge into the unknown. But Dr. Nansen is not to be deterred by any dangers, and is quite prepared not to come back at all, although he fully expects to be in Norway again within five years after leaving next June. What a tale he will have to tell!

The cost of the expedition is not yet known, but two-thirds of it are undertaken

by King Oscar and the Norwegian Government, while private subscriptions, including one from our Royal Geographical Society, make up the balance.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII. AT THE BALL.

THE ball appeared to go off brilliantly. The rooms were large enough not to be crowded, and yet everybody who had been asked came, and Porphyria's idea of bringing together all her neighbours for many miles round was realised. The greatest people in the county were there, who thought it all great fun and enjoyed themselves immensely. There were others, not quite so exalted, who did not approve of Miss Latimer's strange ideas, but yet gave their full value to her large fortune and her fine old house, and agreed that she had a right to do as she pleased. They also prophesied, with admiration of Arthur Nugent's gentle manner and conventionally handsome looks, that he would soon bring his wife into the more beaten paths of society. Then persons of lower rank, arriving rather shy and sensitive, felt their hearts warmed by their hostess's kind and frank reception, by the hospitable light and comfort all around them, the friendliness of an atmosphere which seemed to recognise no differences. Even the stern face of Lucy Thorne, arriving with her brother Frank, who was at first much more subdued than usual, but soon found a girl he admired in his own set, and danced with her happily—even Lucy's face softened by degrees, and quite lost its forbidding expression after a Lancers with Mr. Otto Nugent.

It was later than this, and Otto had again come up to Lucy, who had been specially recommended by Poppy to his kind care, and was talking to her for a minute or two, making her reflect that she had done him injustice, and that he was really much nicer than his brother, when Arthur Nugent waltzed past them with Maggie Farrant, so close as almost to touch them. Maggie looked, as she was, in a state of extraordinary happiness. Her eyes were brilliant; her cheeks, never too red, had just the faint colour which warmed her usual paleness into perfect beauty;

otherwise her akin was almost of the same ivory white as her dress, which was as pretty as that of any more pretentious girl in the room. Many people looked at her and Arthur as they danced. Mrs. Arch was peeping down from the back of the musician-gallery, but nobody thought of her, or heard the remarks she muttered. Poppy, dancing with the most distinguished young man in the county—who admired her and her house so much that he was full of self-reproach, asking himself why the deuce nobody had ever told him about Miss Latimer—pointed out Maggie with a delightful smile to her partner.

"Do you see that girl with black hair, Lord Stanbury? Isn't she lovely?"

"Well—yes, she is," Lord Stanbury confessed, peering through his eyeglass. "Who is she? Never saw her before, I think. Does she live in the county?"

"Oh, yes; she is my nearest neighbour, Miss Farrant. A very great friend of mine."

"Indeed! Yes, very pretty, in that style. Who is she dancing with?"

"Captain Nugent."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. Of course. I'm so blind—never know people. I saw them talking on the stairs, half an hour ago—when we came, in fact—and spoke to him. Saw he was with somebody who seemed to belong here, don't you know. But I was looking for you, and I didn't notice her particularly then. Miss—what did you say?"

"Miss Farrant. Yes, she quite belongs to us. She is one of our party; she came alone," said Poppy in her serene manner.

By this time Lord Stanbury was curious about somebody else, and in politeness to him Poppy had to withdraw her eyes from following Arthur and his partner.

There was nothing for the two to dread in those eyes of hers, if their own consciences did not trouble them. They expressed nothing but admiration, trust, and love. A new and deeper feeling for Maggie had sprung up in Poppy's heart since she had begun to fear that the girl's engagement was a thing to be regretted, not rejoiced in. She had watched for her arrival that evening, had received her with the most marked cordiality and affection, introduced Arthur's friends to her, asked Arthur himself—an unnecessary request—to dance with her; had made it very clear both to the people in the house and to outsiders that this was a guest whom the mistress of Bryans Court delighted to honour.

It was all intoxicating to Maggie. She had never been to such a party before, never danced to such music on such a floor, never seen Bryans Court at its best and most brilliant, with all its fine rooms thrown open and filled with beautifully dressed people. And about it all there was not a shadow of anything to frighten her. She actually did not notice—how could she under Arthur's admiring eyes, and in the sunshine of Poppy's generous kindness!—that Miss Fanny Latimer very nearly turned her back upon her, after giving her the slightest and coldest greeting that manners would allow. She saw Lucy Thorne come in, looking very sulky and dowdy, she thought, and was half ashamed of the consciousness of belonging to her and that ponderous Frank. But Frank did not look so bad in his evening clothes after all, and she carelessly promised him a dance, and won a smile from Lucy in approval of her new frock, and went off to enjoy herself to the height of her untrained youth, quite sure, even before Arthur Nugent told her so, that she was the beauty of the evening, and throwing aside for once, in all these exciting surroundings, even those thoughts of her own falseness which had lately weighed her down. As for Geoffrey, whom she had left in the great arm-chair beside her grandfather's bed, she forgot him altogether.

Otto Nugent had heard Poppy ask Arthur to dance with her friend. He therefore looked after the couple as they glided past with no surprise, but a sort of resigned anxiety which made him pull his small moustache in silence. Then suddenly looking up, he met Lucy Thorne's keen eyes fixed upon him with such an odd expression, that he said to himself: "This good woman knows or suspects something." He felt curious and a little uneasy. "Arthur will be a lucky chap," he thought, "if we steer him through all these rocks safely."

It seemed natural, considering all things, not to let Miss Maggie pass without a remark, and Lucy Thorne evidently expected one. So he said in the quietest tone:

"Your brother Geoffrey is not here to-night!"

"No, and it's a great shame," replied Lucy, with her usual frankness. "He has been left to nurse that old man. I can't quite make out whose fault it is, but they are all selfish together, except Geoffrey."

Maggie Farrant ought to be very much obliged to him. She has never before had such a chance of showing herself off. Miss Latimer spoils her."

"Disappointing for her, though, and for your brother, too."

Lucy laughed.

"Yes; I hope she misses him. I don't know whether he cares much. He didn't want to come. This sort of thing doesn't interest Geoffrey."

"It is a pretty sight, however. Even an artist might condescend," said Otto, still caressing his moustache, and staring down the room after Arthur and Maggie, who had now disappeared. "And you know, Miss Thorne, your future sister-in-law is in herself a very pretty sight."

"Yes, she is a pretty girl, if that's what you mean."

"That is all I mean."

He stood still for a minute, and told himself that, after all, he did not think this good woman knew anything.

The dance was over, people were dispersing and wandering about, distant sounds began to announce supper. Then his wife came by with Captain Lawson.

"Otto, what are you doing? Take somebody down to supper. There, look, there is Lady Jane Fitzhugh at the other end of the room. Where is Arthur? Poppy was asking me just now."

"Am I my brother's keeper? No! At least—yes, much more so than I want to be!" muttered Otto, as he went off to the lady his wife had pointed out to him.

"I saw Arthur just now," Captain Lawson was saying, as he and Alice passed on together. "He was dancing with that awfully pretty girl—I forget what her name is."

"Miss Farrant. Do you admire her so much?"

"Oh, Mrs. Nugent, yes. Most awfully pretty. Such stunning hair and eyes!"

Mrs. Otto Nugent looked frankly contemptuous. She took no trouble to hide this evident feeling, at the risk of being set down, in a man's fashion, as jealous of another woman's superior good looks. She was very angry with her brother-in-law, and out of patience with Poppy and her blind romance. "We shall have a scrimmage before the end of all this," she prophesied to herself. "Arthur is really too bad. Everybody will begin to notice how he runs after that girl."

To Captain Lawson she contented herself with some general remarks on different

kinds of beauty. She declared that a mere pretty face was nothing—worse than nothing—because it simply made a fool of the person who possessed it and of other people too. She talked of race, of breeding, of air, of charm, of distinction, and gave it to be understood that Miss Farrant could not possibly, from the absence of this thing and the other, have any real right to be admired.

Captain Lawson listened and grinned. He was afraid to contradict her, feeling that she was one of those sharp little women who always have the best of it, and that argument might plunge him into confessing tastes which were evidently low. But he secretly resolved that in spite of Mrs. Nugent he would dance with that lovely girl by-and-bye.

So the evening drifted on, and everybody, with a few exceptions, found it delightful. After supper the dancing went on with renewed spirit. Those among Miss Latimer's guests who were naturally most stiff and conventional, most lazy and indifferent, found the brightness and beauty of the whole scene irresistible. The smartest young men, the most modern girls, forgot themselves for once, and were carried away by pure enjoyment as much as their more impressionable elders. There was something in Poppy's dance like an old-fashioned Christmas party of fifty years ago. What this something was, and how it came, would be difficult to tell. It may have been the curiously unmodern ways and disposition of Poppy herself. The spirit of her unconscious simplicity ruled over her house and everybody in it—everybody, that is, who was not too selfish or too preoccupied to feel the happy influence.

But a few people, and those the nearest to Poppy, had anxieties of their own. Mr. Cantillon saw plainly that Miss Fanny Latimer was troubled about something; and it seemed to him that for the first time since their engagement she avoided him a little; at least, she put him off with some foolish answer when he asked in tender confidence whether anything had happened to worry her.

"Oh, yes, Henry!" she said in her quick way. "My gown is ugly—don't you think so? And Arch came and plagued me dreadfully when I wanted to come down early before dinner. It was enough to annoy anybody, I assure you."

"My dear! Your gown ugly! I never saw you look more charming. But that

was unpardonable of Arch. Some of her arrangements wrong? Well, they were soon set right. I never knew anything go off so smoothly."

"So glad you think so. But I must not talk to you now. Something else to do, isn't there? Good-bye."

It was startling to be dismissed so decidedly. The Rector knew Fanny was right, of course, but he was a little hurt all the same. He sat down in a corner, and watched her black skirts sweeping away.

He did not go much into the ball-room that night. The music pleased him better at a distance; the swimming, circling figures on the shining floor made him feel a little giddy. Like a good many other older people, he moved about and found amusement in the drawing-room, the billiard-room, the library. He talked to everybody he knew, watched the doors in a generally vain hope that Fanny might appear in them, stifled a good many yawns, and once or twice desperately took up a book. Among his thoughts were some that regretted Geoffrey Thorne's absence.

"And I, the parish priest, perfectly useless here—why am I not sitting by that old man's bed, instead of a young fellow who ought to be dancing?"

Then somebody asked him to take some lady in to supper, and he became conscious that there were duties here, even for him. This lady, unknown to him before, thought the Rector of Bryans was the most delightful man she had ever met in her life.

Supper was not long over, and the dancing was just beginning again, when Captain Lawson and Mr. Scott, who were even more intimate with each other than with Arthur Nugent, met at the foot of the stairs, both deliberately setting forth to claim their partners.

"Johnny," said young Scott, who was long-eared and a gossip, "do you wish you were Arthur?"

"Not for all this — no. Shouldn't mind being him to-night, for Miss Farrant has not a single dance to give me, and I'm sure he has danced with her half-a-dozen times already."

"Yes, I know. I don't think he ought," said Scott.

"I suppose nobody cares. Miss Latimer would never——"

Scott, more cautious, made him a sign, and went on in a lower tone:

"I don't wonder at him, but it is a little too strong. Did you see them go out of the room just now?—for this waltz,

I suppose. He can do what he likes, of course, lucky beggar—but I saw Miss Latimer looking at him——"

"You did!"

"The aunt, I mean—not the niece."

"Ah! she's too sublime."

"Well, he oughtn't to do it. That sort of conspicuousness—and it's not polite to other people. Besides, it's selfish."

"Miss Farrant's engaged," said Lawson.

"I know she is, to some artist fellow. Pity he is not here to look after her."

"So it is," Captain Lawson replied heartily; and they proceeded slowly to mount the stairs.

Then a curtain moved, close to where they had been speaking. It covered one of the doors leading into the library, which had been open behind it, and very slowly, as if she had suddenly become afflicted with old age, Mrs. Nugent advanced into the hall. Her fine eyes flashed as she looked up the low flight of steps, and saw the two young officers about to turn into the ball-room. Arthur's friends! Fools! And what was he?

Mrs. Nugent's enjoyment, that evening, had certainly been less than that of anybody else. She had not yet recovered from her irritation against Arthur the day before. He had resented it, much more than he usually did, though to other people his manner had been all sweetness. But to-day again he had been cold and distant with her, and there was about him a kind of suppressed excitement, too, which gave her an additional feeling of vague uneasiness. And nobody had watched him through the evening with more than his mother's keenness. His evident attention to Maggie Farrant had at first merely surprised her a little.

After he had danced with her a second time, she snatched an opportunity and said a word of remonstrance. "No necessity to be too good-natured—the girl has plenty of her own sort of people." He hardly answered, but she just caught, "Poppy asked me to dance with her." Then, as nobody knew better than his mother—though she was wrong in thinking herself the only person who knew—as the ball went on, though Arthur had to dance with other people, though he danced of course with Poppy now and then, it was all an impatient, hurried affair till he was free to find himself by Maggie's side again. And the look with which she received him! This was nothing new, evidently; but to Mrs. Nugent it was an extreme

surprise and displeasure. That Arthur should flirt so unblushingly within the walls of Bryans Court itself; that this third-rate girl should be on such terms with him—and yet that neither Poppy nor any one else should see what was going on!

Mrs. Nugent had the greatest difficulty in restraining herself, in being agreeable to the other guests and keeping a calm countenance. She would willingly have turned Maggie out of the Court into the snow, and sent Arthur to his room like a naughty child. But she had sufficient self-command to know that her son's salvation, in a worldly point of view, depended on her management of the situation. She blessed the stupidity of Poppy, of everybody who saw nothing. She had no idea that the state of things had forcibly struck any one but herself, who knew Arthur so well and could read his real feelings, till she paused inside that curtained door, hearing the two young men's voices, and made out that even they, with their small amount of wisdom, were blaming him.

"Arthur is mad," she said to herself. "Has he deceived me all this time? What am I to do?"

She found no answer to this question. She walked deliberately upstairs and in at the door of the ball-room. It was not quite so full now, and she could plainly see the couples who were dancing to the swing of the most musical of waltzes. Arthur and Maggie were not among them.

At the other end of the room Mrs. Nugent saw Poppy dancing again with Lord Stanbury.

"There would have been a match for her!" thought Arthur's mother with a pang of real remorse.

She sat down near the door, for her strength seemed to fail. Her face was flushed with anger and perplexity. What, she asked herself, was to be done with a young man who had so evidently taken leave of his senses? She tried to think, to decide what she had better do.

After a few moments, to her great relief, she saw Otto with a group of people a little way off. He looked round, and a slight sign brought him instantly to her side. She felt that this terrible annoyance could not be borne quite alone, and that Otto, of course, was the person to be confided in.

"Do you want anything, mother?" he said, looking at her anxiously.

Mrs. Nugent was very handsome that

evening, in velvet and beautiful old lace, but she had not her usual agreeable calmness. Arthur's prank the day before had tried her patience a good deal. Otto knew that, and now he saw, as he watched her colour change and her hands tremble, that something more and worse was on her mind. He guessed instantly what it was.

"Don't let anybody hear," she said, glancing nervously round as she spoke to him. "Where is your brother?"

"I don't see him——"

"Nor do I," she said impatiently. "But I want to know where he is. What is he doing, Otto? I have been watching him to-night with——with absolute astonishment. He has forgotten himself in the most extraordinary way. Have you noticed? Do you know what I mean?"

"Yes; I know what you mean. It's nothing very new, you know, mother. Certainly to-night he seems rather crazy on the subject. But I don't think he is fool enough to cut his own throat."

"Good heavens! And may I ask how long this has been going on? And you in his confidence! And does the whole county talk as I heard Mr. Scott and Captain Lawson talking just now? And only I, and that poor Poppy and her people, to be ignorant! Tell me at once all you know, and how long this has been going on. You will bear me witness, Otto, that I always disliked that girl!"

"I don't think it is altogether the girl's fault——"

"Nonsense, it is always a woman's fault! And in this case, with all Poppy's extraordinary kindness—which I always thought ridiculous—I call it scandalous. Arthur is an idiot, but she——"

"Look here," said Otto, "I think you are rather needlessly disturbed, you know. I don't believe the county talks at all. Lawson and Scott are not worth considering. Nobody actually knows anything, except Alice and myself."

"But tell me how long——"

"Suppose we go down into the library for a few minutes. We may come across Arthur, and a word from you might keep him in order for the rest of the evening. And I can't tell you in public, like this."

Mrs. Nugent was ready to go with him. As they went downstairs, he tried to say all the calming and pacifying things he could think of, having no wish for a scene, and being uncomfortably conscious that in her present mood his mother was almost capable of making one.

They went into the library by the curtained door near the foot of the stairs. In the large, shadowy room, its walls lined with bookcases, there was only the soft light of the fire and one lamp. A great screen stretched across between the fire and the door, and behind that screen was a square nest of warmth and comfort, Mr. Cantillon's favourite spot in the whole house, and the scene of many happy talks, in the last few weeks, between him and Miss Fanny Latimer. Otto thought of the large sofa there as a good place for his mother to rest in, while he gave her his own views on Arthur's foolish behaviour.

But as they stepped in upon the soft carpet, he suddenly turned to her and made a sign of silence. For a moment or two they stood together, breathless, inside the door, which not being really shut, had opened itself noiselessly.

There were voices talking inside the screen.

"I tell you," said Arthur—the rash young man did not even trouble himself to speak in a whisper—"if you will go away with me to-night, I'll marry you to-morrow."

"Do you know that you are very wicked?" said a soft, sweet voice in answer.

Mrs. Nugent had started when Arthur spoke, and turned a white face to Otto. He caught her hand and held it fast.

"One minute," he breathed in her ear.

"I dare say—but who makes me so? Maggie, I love you so that I shall go mad, and you won't even look or listen."

"I've looked and listened enough," the girl said. "And we have had one happy evening, though we both deserve to be miserable. It's over now—and if you can't talk sense, please order the fly and let me go home."

"I can't let you go—I can't. You belong to me."

"I do not belong to you—and you must let me go—Arthur."

Mrs. Nugent could bear this no longer, and even Otto felt his face burn. He was ashamed of listening, treasonous and unauthorised as this unhappy love-making might be. When his mother snatched her hand from his and moved quickly forward, he would have escaped through the door behind him, but for the fear of leaving her alone with those two. She

might say or do something which would make the mischief irreparable.

Instead of escaping, therefore, Otto with great presence of mind flung a chair against a table; and thus, when Mrs. Nugent arrived at the other side of the screen, Arthur and Maggie were standing up side by side facing her.

That was an awful moment, for Mrs. Nugent could not speak; she only stood and stared at them.

After the first instant of waiting, Arthur made a movement to put his arm round Maggie and draw her close to him. But she would not allow this.

"I am going," she said under her breath; and without looking at either the mother or son she walked quickly out past Otto, who gazed at her rather helplessly.

He had never imagined that a girl like Maggie could look so splendidly beautiful.

Her hand was on the door, but she turned round and beckoned to him. He followed her into the hall.

"Would you be so good as to find somebody and order my fly, Mr. Nugent?" she said, with a curious little air of dignity. "And don't think too much about that. It's nothing. He will forget, you know. I will never see him again, if I can help it. Don't spoil anybody's happiness because of me."

Otto could not speak. Somehow, though the girl's manner and words, and the white desperation of her face, were a little theatrical, he could not help admiring her. He thought she was probably sincere, and that his fool of a brother was most to blame for the whole unfortunate business. But he also thought, at that moment, that Arthur had succeeded in ruining his own prospects. It really did not seem as if he could marry Porphyria Latimer now.

Otto behaved kindly and well. He did not go back to look for his mother till he had seen Miss Farrant safely off home, and wished her good night with the politeness due to Poppy's friend. He even composed a speech for Poppy, to explain that Miss Farrant was anxious about her grandfather, and had therefore thought it best to leave directly after supper, without coming back to the ball-room.

Then, strolling back to the library with his cool and superior air, Otto wished for Alice, and wondered what she would say.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Service," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER II.

THE long railway journey from Paris to Nice was nearly over. The passengers, jaded and tired out, for the most part, after a night in the train, were beginning to rouse to a languid interest in the landscape; to become aware that dawn and the uncomfortable and unfamiliar early day had some time since given place to a fuller and maturer light; and to consult their watches, reminding themselves—or one another, as the case might be—that they were due at Nice at twelve-fifteen. The passengers were not numerous. The train had left Paris at an uncomfortable hour, and only pressing necessity, or complete indifference as to the boundary line dividing night from day, could have induced a traveller to avail himself of its departure.

Alone in one of the first-class carriages was a passenger who had accepted the situation with the most matter-of-fact indifference from first to last. He had made his arrangements for the night, with the skill and deliberation of an experienced traveller; and as the morning advanced he had composed himself, as comfortably as circumstances permitted, in a corner of his carriage, now and then casting a keen, comprehensive glance at the country through which he was being carried. These glances, however, were evidently instinctive and almost unconscious. For the most part he gazed straight before him with a preoccupied frown and a grave and anxious expression

in marked contrast with his physical imperturbability. He was a man of apparently three or four-and-thirty; tall; rather lean than thin; and very muscular-looking. His face, and the right hand from which he had pulled off the glove, were bronzed a deep red-brown, and he wore a long brown beard; but he was not otherwise remarkable-looking. His eyes, indeed, were very keen and steady, but the rest of his face conveyed the impression that they owed these characteristics rather to trained habits of material observation than to general intellectual depths; the mouth was firm and strong, but neither sensitive nor sympathetic, and the straight, well-cut nose was as distinctly too thin as the rather high forehead was too narrow. On a much-worn travelling-bag on the seat beside him, was the name Dennis Falconer.

The train steamed slowly into the station at Nice at last; the traveller stepped out on to the platform, and the shade of grave preoccupation which had touched him seemed to descend on him more heavily and all-absorbingly as he did so. He was walking down the platform, looking neither to the right nor the left, when he was stopped by a quick exclamation from a little wiry man with a shrewd, clever face who had just come into the station.

"Falconer, as I'm alive," he cried. "Well met, my boy!"

The gravity of the younger man's face relaxed for the moment into a smile of well-pleased astonishment.

"Dr. Aston!" he exclaimed. "Why, I was thinking of looking you up in London! I'd no idea you were abroad!"

The other man laughed, a very pleasant, jovial laugh.

"I'm taking a holiday," he said. "I don't know that I've any particular right to it, but I don't know these places, and I took it into my head that I should like to have a look at a Carnival in Nice. And you, my boy? Just back from Africa, you are, I know. You've come for the Carnival by way of a change, eh?"

Falconer's face altered.

"No!" he said gravely, and with a good deal of restraint. "I've not come for pleasure. Very much the reverse, I'm sorry to say."

He paused, apparently intending to say no more on the subject. But the keen, kindly interest in his hearer's face, or something magnetic about the man, influenced him in spite of himself.

"I don't know whether the facts about this bank business are known here yet," he said, "but if they are you'll understand, Aston, when I tell you that I and my old uncle are the only male relations of William Romaine's wife."

A quick flash of grave intelligence passed across Dr. Aston's face. He hesitated, and glanced dubiously at the younger man.

"When did you leave London?" he said abruptly.

"Yesterday morning," was the somewhat surprised reply.

"You've come in good time, my boy," said Dr. Aston very gravely. "Mrs. Romaine wants a relation with her if ever she did in her life. Was her husband ever a friend of yours, Dennis?"

"I have never met him. I know very little even of his wife. What is it, doctor?"

"William Romaine shot himself yesterday morning!"

A short, sharp exclamation broke from Falconer, and then there was a moment's total silence between the two men as the sudden, unspeakable horror in Falconer's face resolved itself into a shocked, almost awestruck gravity.

"I am thankful to have met you," he said at last in a low, stern voice; "and I am more than thankful that I came."

He held out his hand as he spoke, as though what he had heard impelled him to go on his way, and Dr. Aston wrung it with warm sympathy.

"We shall meet again," he said. "Let me know if I can be of any use. I am staying at the 'Français.'"

Grave and stern, but not apparently shaken or rendered nervous by the news

he had heard, or by the prospect of the meeting before him, as a sympathetic or emotional man must have been, Dennis Falconer strode out of the station. Grave and stern he reached his destination, and enquired for Mrs. Romaine. His question was answered by the proprietor himself, supplemented by half-audible ejaculations from attendant waiters, in a tone in which sympathetic interest, familiarity, and even a certain amount of resentment were inextricably blended.

Monsieur would see Madame Romaine—"cette pauvre madame," of a demeanour so beautiful, yes, even in these frightful circumstances, so beautiful and so distinguished! Monsieur had but just arrived from England—monsieur had then perhaps not heard? Monsieur was aware! He was a kinsman of madame! Monsieur would then doubtless appreciate the so great inconvenience occasioned, the hardly-to-be-reckoned damage sustained by one of the first hotels in Nice by the event! Monsieur would see madame at once! But yes, madame was visible. There was, in fact, a monsieur with her even now—an English monsieur from the English Scotland Yard. Madame had sent—But monsieur was indeed in haste.

Monsieur left no possibility of doubt on that score. The waiter, told off by a wave of the proprietor's hand on the vigorous demonstration to that effect evoked by the mention of the monsieur from Scotland Yard, had to hasten his usual pace considerably to keep ahead of those quick, firm footsteps, and it was almost breathlessly that he at last threw open a door at the end of a long corridor.

"Mr. Romaine's name is public property in connection with the affair, then, in London, since yesterday morning?"

The words, spoken in a hard, thin, woman's voice, came to Falconer's ear as the door opened; and the waiter's announcement, "A kinsman of madame," passed unheeded as he moved hastily forward into the room.

It was a small private sitting-room, evidently by no means the best in the hotel. With his back to the door stood a young man in an attitude of professional calm, which was rather belied by a certain nervous fingering of the hat he held, which seemed to say that he found his position a somewhat embarrassing one. Facing him, and indirectly facing the door, stood Mrs. Romaine.

She was dressed in black from head to

foot, but the gown she wore was one that she had had in her wardrobe—very fashionably made, with no trace of mourning about it other than its hue.

Emphasized, perhaps, by the incongruity of her conventional smartness, but a result of the past twenty-four hours, independent of any such emphasis, all the more salient points of her demeanour of the day before seemed to be accentuated into hardness. Her perfect self-possession, as she faced the young man before her—it was the man she had noticed on the previous morning questioning the waiter—was hard; her perfect freedom from any touch of emotion or agitation was hard; her face, a little sharpened and haggard, and reddened slightly about the eyelids, apparently rather from want of sleep than from tears, was very hard; her eyes, brighter than usual, and her rather thin mouth, were eloquent of bitterness rather than desolation of spirit.

She turned quickly towards the door as Falconer entered, and looked at him for an instant with an unrecognising stare. Then, as he advanced to her without speaking, and with outstretched hand, something that was almost a spasm of comprehension passed across her face, settling into a stiff little society smile.

"It is Dennis Falconer, isn't it?" she said, holding out her hand to him. "I ought to have known you at once. I am very glad to see you."

"My uncle thought—— We decided yesterday morning——"

Dennis Falconer hesitated and stopped. He was thrown out of his reckoning, taken hopelessly aback, as it were, by something so entirely unlike what he had expected as was her whole bearing; though, indeed, he had been quite unconscious of expecting anything. But Mrs. Romaine remained completely mistress of the situation.

"It is very kind of you," she said, with the same hard composure. "It was very kind of my uncle." She hesitated, hardly perceptibly, and then said, the lines about her mouth growing more bitter, "You have heard?"

Falconer bowed his head in assent, and she turned toward the young man, who had drawn a little apart during this colloquy. "This gentleman comes from Scotland Yard," she said. "Perhaps you will be so kind as to go into matters with him. I do not understand business or legal details. Mr. Falconer will represent

me," she added to the young man, who bowed with an alacrity that suggested, as did his glance at Falconer, that the prospect of conferring with a man rather than a woman was a distinct relief to him. Then, before Falconer's not very rapid mind had adjusted itself to the situation, she had bowed slightly to the young man and left the room.

CHAPTER III.

THREE days before, the name of William Romaine had been widely known and respected throughout Europe as the name of a successful and distinguished financier. Now, it was the centre of a nine-days' wonder as the name of a master swindler, detected.

A bank, established in London within the last twelve months in connection with a company offering an exceptionally high rate of interest, had suddenly suspended payment. The circumstances were so ordinary, and the explanation offered so plausible, that at first no suspicion of underhand dealings presented itself. It was in connection with the first whispers—which ran like wildfire through financial London—of something beneath the surface that it first became known that William Romaine had some connection, as yet undefined by rumour, with the bank in question; a fact hitherto quite unknown. The whisper grew with rapidity which was almost incredible even to the whisperers, into a definite and authentic shout of accusation; and with the exposure of an outline of such daring and ingenious fraud as had not been perpetrated for many a day, another fact had become public property. The exposure had been brought about by an incredibly short-sighted blunder on the part of the master mind by which the whole affair had been conceived. William Romaine's was the master mind, and William Romaine, in trying to overreach alike his dupes and his confederates, had overreached himself. His own hand had created the clue which had led eventually to the ruin of the scheme he had originated. His death, with the news of which the London Stock Exchange was ringing only a few hours after it was known in Nice, was the forfeit paid by a strong nature to which success in all its undertakings was the very salt of life.

Mrs. Romaine, on leaving the sitting-room, passed along the passages to her own room—not that which she had

entered twenty-four hours before to consult with her husband as to the pleasure expedition of the afternoon—her face and manner altering not at all. Her composure was evidently neither forced nor unreal. The emotion created in her by the tragic circumstances through which she was living was obviously not the heartbroken shame and despair naturally to be attributed to a wife so situated, but a bitter and burning resentment. Had William Romaine passed away in the ordinary course of nature, or by any violent accident, his widow would have mourned him with conventional lamentation and with a certain amount of genuine regret. He had committed suicide; had committed suicide, as the letter lying by his side revealed to his wife even while she hardly realised that he was indeed dead, as his only way of escape from the consequences of fraud on the brink of detection, and his wife's attitude to his memory under these circumstances was the natural outcome of the character of their married life.

Hermia Stirling at nineteen had been a pretty, practical, matter-of-fact girl, with her rather shallow nature somewhat prematurely matured. She had been an orphan from her babyhood, and having no near relations in England, her nineteen years of life had been lived under more varied auspices, resulting in more desultory education, moral as well as mental, than was good for her. The most impressionable of those years, however—those from fourteen to nineteen—had been passed with connections of her mother's, young and wealthy society women, with no ideas beyond society life, and with little perceptible principle but that of social expediency. Hermia was just nineteen, just out, and taking to the life before her with the ease and zest of a born woman of the world, when one of these ladies died, and the other married and went away to America with her husband. At this juncture the girl's guardian, her father's only brother, returned from India to settle in London with his only child, a girl two years older than Hermia, and it was obvious that his home must be also Hermia's. But neither old Mr. Falconer nor his daughter had the slightest taste or capacity for fashionable life, and before she had spent six months with them the world had become to Hermia an insufferably dull and tiresome place.

She had known William Romaine in

society. He was rich, he was handsome, and he was very popular; there was that indefinable something about him—manner, magnetism, or tact—which sometimes characterises a man of his peculiar mental bent; a man to whom his fellow-creatures are only pieces in a game of skill, to be manipulated at his pleasure; and which constitutes a kind of dominating charm. He was not the less "somebody" in that he was vaguely understood to be a business man of some sort, with dealings in shares and stocks all over the world—a locality which lent a picturesque haziness to his affairs. Consequently, when he followed Hermia into her new life and asked her to marry him, she passed over the fact that he was five-and-twenty years her senior, and consented with the practical promptitude of a nature for which romance and sentiment are not. For eighteen months she and her husband had lived in a large house in Kensington, entertaining and being entertained through two brilliant seasons, which took away any girlishness which Hermia had ever possessed, and gave her qualities which she admired infinitely more. She found her husband very pleasant, very easy to live with, and after the first six months quite unexacting. His business took him into the City every day at this time, though, as his wife said, complaisantly, he was not the least like the ordinary City man; but at the end of the season which followed on the birth of their child he announced that he would have to spend certainly six months, possibly more, in America.

He showed no ardent desire to take his wife with him, and his wife had no desire whatever to go. She wanted to spend the rest of the summer at one of the fashionable health resorts, and to winter in Rome. Such an arrangement was accordingly made between them in the simplest, most matter-of-fact way, arguing no shadow of ill-will on either side; and during the four years which had elapsed since then, husband and wife had each gone his or her own way, living together when occasion served for a month or two at a time, now in London, now in Paris, now in Rome, and presumably finding the arrangement mutually satisfactory. The little boy had been left for the most part to the care of Mrs. Romaine's cousin, Frances Falconer. Mrs. Romaine regarded him with the careless, half-dormant affection of a woman to whom her child owes nothing but bare

life; to whom its arrival in the world has been rather a tiresome interlude, merely, in her round of pleasures and pursuits; who has had no time since, and has seen no occasion to make time, to give it that care which other people, as it seemed to her, could give it quite as well as she; and who is waiting, vaguely, until it shall be "grown up," to find it interesting.

That her husband's "business" had taken him in the course of those four years into every corner of the globe where the passing of money from hand to hand is elevated into a science, Mrs. Romaine knew; and with that fact her knowledge of his affairs began and ended. He made her a handsome allowance; whenever they met she found him the same handsome, rather callous, but withal fascinating man; clever with a cleverness which she could appreciate—the cleverness which made money, and held a position in society—and she had asked nothing more of him. Her regard for him—if regard that could be called which was more truly indifference—had been founded on appreciation of his success. Before failure, before the social disgrace which must be the lot of a detected swindler and suicide, it disappeared totally and instantaneously, to be replaced by a burning sense of personal outrage and insult.

It was late in the afternoon before she left her room again. Dennis Falconer received a message to the effect that Mrs. Romaine was sure that he must be tired, and begged that he would not think of her until he had lunched and rested.

When she did reappear she was in widow's weeds, and the contrast between her dress, with its tragic significance of desolation, and her face, untouched with feeling, was inexpressible.

Dennis Falconer was in the sitting-room when she entered it. His sense of duty was largely developed, and he was also keenly sensible of the moral aspect of the affair with which he was brought into such close contact. The first of these senses kept him in waiting in anticipation of the appearance of the woman for whose assistance he was there; and the second weighed so heavily upon him that the publicity of the hotel smoking-room would have been intolerable to him under the circumstances.

He rose quickly as Mrs. Romaine came in, a look of slight constraint on his face.

Dennis Falconer had no near relation,

and perhaps this absence of close ties to England had had something to do with his adoption of the life of a traveller and explorer in connection with the Royal Geographical Society. Old Mr. Falconer, Mrs. Romaine's uncle, was his second cousin only, though the younger man had been brought up to address him as uncle; but in so small a clan distant relationship counts for more than in a family where first cousins and brothers and sisters abound, and there was nothing strange to Dennis Falconer or to Mrs. Romaine in the fact of his coming to her support, even though they hardly knew one another. But Falconer had been chilled and even repelled by her manner of the morning, and he was very conscious now of having his cousin's acquaintance to make, and of approaching the process with a vague prejudice against her in his mind.

This prejudice was not dissipated by her first words, spoken with a suavity, somewhat low in pitch, truly, but with a tact ignoring of the significance of their meeting which seemed to the man she addressed—to whom society life with its obligations and conventionalities was practically an unknown quantity—simply jarring and unsuitable.

"I hope you are rested?" she said. "I suppose, though, that to such a traveller as you are, the journey from London to Nice is nothing. I hear from Frances constantly about your exploits, and she tells me that we are to expect great things of you. What a long time it is since we met!"

She sat down as she spoke, with a hard little smile, and Falconer murmured something almost unintelligible. Thinking that his manner arose from mere embarrassment, instinct dictated to her to set him at his ease; and with no faintest comprehension of his attitude of mind she proceeded to chat to him about his own affairs, asking him questions which elicited coherent answers indeed, but answers which grew terser and sterner until she thought differently that her cousin was a rather heavy person. At last there came a pause; a pause during which Falconer gazed grimly and uncomfortably at the floor. And when Mrs. Romaine broke it, it was with a different tone and manner, hard and matter-of-fact.

"The detective told you more than he told me, possibly," she said. "If there is anything more for me to hear I should like to hear it. You had better, I think, read

this letter. Mr. Romaine received it yesterday morning."

She handed him that letter written on blue paper which had lain by the dead man's side, and Falconer took it in silence.

The letter was from one of William Romaine's confederates. It was the desperate letter of a desperate man who knew himself to be addressing the man to whom he was to owe ruin and disgrace. The crisis had evidently been so wholly unexpected that detection was actually imminent before the criminals recognised it as even possible. The gist of the letter was contained in the statement that before it met the eyes of the man for whom it was intended, the whole scheme would be exploded.

Falconer read it through, his face very stern. He finished it and refolded it, still in silence, and Mrs. Romaine said in a dry, thin voice:

"It bears out, as you see, what the detective no doubt told you—that there was so little ground for suspicion three days ago that he was sent out merely to watch, and without even a warrant. He found a telegram waiting for him here from his authorities yesterday morning."

"He told me so!" answered Falconer distantly and constrainedly, handing her back the letter as he spoke without comment.

"There is not the faintest possibility of hushing it up, I conclude!" she asked, in the same hard voice.

Falconer looked at her for a moment, the indefinite disapprobation of her, which had been growing in him almost with every word she said, taking form in his face in a distinct expression of reprobation.

"Not the faintest!" he said emphatically. "Nor do I see that such a possibility is in any way to be desired."

She glanced at him with a quick movement of her eyebrows. She did not speak, however, and a silence ensued between them; one of those uncomfortable silences eloquent of conscious want of sympathy. It was broken this time by Falconer, who spoke with formal politeness and restraint.

"You will wish to get away from this place as soon as possible, no doubt," he said. "There may be some slight delay before we are put into possession of the papers and other effects at present in the hands of the authorities here. But I will, of course, do all I can to hasten matters."

"Thanks!" she said. "The papers? Oh, you mean Mr. Romaine's papers!"

Are there any, do you think? A will, I suppose?"

"The will, if there is one, will be so much waste paper, I fear," said Falconer with uncompromising sternness. "There is no chance of any property being saved, even if it was possible to wish for such a thing. But there may be papers, nevertheless; in fact, no doubt there must be; and you will, of course, wish to have them."

"Yes," said Mrs. Romaine thoughtfully; "yes, of course." She paused a moment, and then added in a dry, constrained voice: "Do you mean me to understand that I am absolutely penniless?"

"Was your own money in your own hands, or in Mr. Romaine's?"

"In Mr. Romaine's."

"Then I fear there can be no doubt that such is the case."

Falconer spoke very stiffly and distantly, and Mrs. Romaine rose from her chair a little abruptly, and walked to the window. When she turned to him again it was to speak of the formalities necessary with the Nice authorities, and a few moments later the interview was ended by the appearance of dinner.

During the few days that followed, the distance between them, which that first interview established so imperceptibly but so certainly, never lessened; it grew, indeed, with their contact with one another.

To Falconer Mrs. Romaine's whole attitude of mind, her whole personality, was simply and entirely antipathetic. That a woman under such circumstances should speak, and act, and think as Mrs. Romaine spoke, and acted, and—as far as he could tell—thought; with so little sense of any but the social aspect of her husband's crime; with so little realisation of the ruin that crime had brought to hundreds of innocent people; with so little moral feeling of any kind; was in the highest degree reprehensible to him. Having assumed a mental attitude of reprehension, he stopped short; his perceptions were not sufficiently keen to allow of his understanding that some pity might be due also.

Suffering is not always to be estimated by the worth of the object through which it is inflicted; not often, indeed, in this world, where the sum of man's suffering is out of all proportion greater than the sum of man's spirituality. Mrs. Romaine's conception of life might be in the last degree narrow and selfish, and as such it might be in the

highest degree to be deprecated; but it was all she had, and within its limits her life was now in ruin. Her aims and ends in life might be of the poorest, and deserving of unsparing condemnation; but she had nothing beyond, and the pain of their overthrow was to her dormant sensibility not so very disproportionate to the suffering inflicted on a more sensitive organisation by the shattering of higher hopes.

Mrs. Romayne for her part found her cousin, with the reserve and formality of demeanour which the situation developed in him, simply a tiresome and uncongenial companion. He was very attentive to her. His manner, as she acknowledged to herself more than once with a heavy sigh, was excellent, and he managed her difficult and painful affairs with admirable strength and tact; she learnt in the course of those few days to respect him and depend on him, in spite of herself and even against her will. But it was not surprising that the end of their enforced dual solitude should be looked for more or less eagerly by both parties. They were almost entirely dependent on one another for companionship. Falconer, it is true, saw Dr. Aston once or twice; but of Mrs. Romayne's acquaintances not one had even left a card of condolence upon her. Neither the Birketts nor any other of the pleasure-seekers who had been so anxious for her society, showed any sign of being aware of her existence under her present circumstances.

The form taken by Falconer's first allusion to the probable limits of their detention in Nice had created in both of them, with one of those vague chains of idea which are so unaccountable and so often experienced, a tendency to think and speak of the termination of that detention, when they did speak together on the subject, as "when the papers are given up." And the papers, thus elevated into a kind of order of release, obtained in the minds of both a kind of fictitious importance on their own account. Mrs. Romayne found herself thinking about them, conjecturing about them, even dreaming about them; until at last when they were actually placed in her hand, they possessed a curious fascination for her.

It was about midday when she and Falconer returned from their final appearance before the authorities. She stood in the middle of the room holding the large, shabby despatch-box, lately handed to

her with a courteous "Papers, doubtless, madame"; the noise of the Carnival floated in at the window in striking contrast with the two sombre figures.

"I think I will go and look them over!" she said in a low, rather surprised voice. "You would like to go out, perhaps. Please don't think about me. I will spend the day quietly indoors."

He answered her courteously, and she left the room slowly, with her eyes fixed rather curiously on the despatch-box in her hand.

SKETCHES IN IVIZA.

IN the hotel of Palma, the capital of Majorca, they tried to dissuade me from visiting Iviza, the least of the three chief islands of the Balearics. But, in fact, the very arguments they used for this purpose were against them in my opinion.

"Since I can remember, señor," said the innkeeper himself, "no Englishman has taken the trouble. It is by no means the mode to go so much out of the way."

But I had a budget of literature about the islands, both from the fine club-house of Palma over the way and from the landlord's own collection; and from these writings it seemed to me that Iviza was just the place in which to get a glimpse of some primitive people. The respected writers called the islanders very hard names, and ascribed to them all the sins of the Decalogue. They were at the same time said to be extremely religious and criminal, and remarkably illiterate. In the rural districts of the island the proportion of those who can read and write was not three per cent. These various characteristics seemed to indicate an interesting people, and so I arranged to be off by the next steamer.

Further, I had before me a collection of Iviza ballads and elegies, in which the prevalent note of amorous sadness was very attractive. It recalled the poetry of Coraica and Sardinia on kindred themes. In all probability the people themselves were likely to suggest a comparison with the people of those other two large islands. At any rate, the Moorish element of Sardinia could not be so very dissimilar in its offshoots from the product of the old Moorish element in the population of Iviza.

Here is the beginning of one of these strange, sombre songs of Iviza:

"How shall I sing, my brothers, if my heart is heavy ?

"Instead of being merry, sadness has possessed me. There is also good cause why I am not what I was wont to be.

"I am very young, yet I am not married, and this, not because I despise women, but because I had not met one that pleased me.

"Now, however, that such a one has come before me, all is in vain, because her father says he does not like me. This, too, before I have asked her hand of him ! Was there ever such a piece of forestalling ?

"But I cannot submit to this rebuff, nor will I believe this stony-hearted man."

As may be supposed, the lover in the end has little idea of being obstructed by "papa" in his suit.

"So long as you hold to the promise you gave me"—he declares to the maiden—"I swear to thee by Him who created me that I will keep my word."

Another song of the same kind, in which the damsel, however, appears reluctant to marry her suitor, ends very oddly. The youth passes over his heart's affairs, and magnanimously advises the girl about her own future. He ridicules the thought that she will obtain happiness by marrying another richer than himself, "for God also was poor." She is rather to be virtuous and contented :

"Let us try to lead a good life and die in holiness ; then on the Judgement Day our good deeds shall be of profit to us. Do not, therefore, live carelessly. Keep the Ten Commandments, so thou mayest have God for a father, and all the saints for relatives. Let us live like Christians, and so gain heaven."

Such wooings are not of civilisation. They are the mark of a people neither wholly of the new nor the old order of things. It would be odd, indeed, if the island whence they proceeded did not offer some piquant pictures to the visitor.

The next morning at eight o'clock, therefore, I set off by the steamer from Palma's bay. The sea was still and blue. Motionless, also, were the many windmills of Palma's suburbs. The interior mountains of Majorca were an enchanting pale purple in the early light. Only the practised eye could discern in those distant diaphanous veils of vapour about the highest summits, the beginning of the thunderstorms which by ten or eleven o'clock were sure to be in full career, as they had been daily

for the last week. Long ere then, however, we should be far from them.

The steamer idled over the smooth sea on this quiet spring day, and gave us a pleasant passage. After four hours the crags of Iviza arose above the horizon. They came nearer, so that at length we could admire their fair mottling of pink and silver-grey. Of trees there seemed but few, though an infrequent pine top suggested that behind the stern coast-line there were sylvan valleys even here.

Then the city of Iviza on its bold headland showed itself and the island of Formentera, with its cape stretching near to the southern headland of Iviza. And so at length, after a ticklish little bit of navigation, we doubled another craggy headland and steered between it and a rocky spur into Iviza's harbour. We were at once in water perfectly glassy—a thorough lagoon, in which the walls and buildings of the town were reflected with startling clearness. A Russian barque and a Norwegian schooner were the only ships of size in the sequestered little place. Our steamer, though but a small one, made a fair show in the harbour.

It was easy to get ashore. Two olive-skinned boatmen rowed us to the Marina, where the houses stood three storeys high, pink and dirty white, and hung with clothes from the eaves downwards. Here, near the mouth of a black sewer, pestilential to smell, stands Iviza's hotel, unannounced to the world by aught in the nature of a sign or inscription. It looks upon the lagoon, and beyond is the green fringe of the bay, where the gardens and groves of fig and almond-trees, set with palm-trees, give a very pleasant character to the landscape. The church bell chimed the hour as we faced the landlord of the hotel and proclaimed our need of accommodation.

Now, as all the world knows, it is well to get at the civil side of a Spanish inn-keeper. He is as sensitive as a grandee, and not to be coerced into complaisance by the richest traveller in the world. I fancied I knew my duty in the matter thoroughly. But this Don John was extra punctilious ; and it was only after a wearisome amount of flattery that I persuaded him to receive me for two or three days as a guest. He was afraid he might not understand me well enough, afraid I might not be content with his catering, and much else. But he was won at length, and when I broke my

fast with a tomato omelette and the native wine, his broad face showed an interest in me and my welfare for the time being that assured me that Don John had a good heart in his body.

I confessed to myself that I disliked my bedroom; but I said all manner of nice things about it to Don John. There were three of us in it, and I was to have the bed with the red counterpane, and near the petticoat hanging on the wall. The floor was positively filthy, and the amount of dirt-engendering lumber that the room contained, as well as the three beds and the petticoat, was surprising. A water-jug and basin fit for a tea-tray were shown to me; and the landlord emptied the former out of the window there and then, on the heads of the town's-folk in the street below. Of saints and martyrs in chromo-lithograph there were no fewer than seven on one wall of the room. There was also a clock, ticking loudly, and a large crucifix. You see, it was a well-occupied little bed-chamber.

I had nearly forgotten one thing else which shared this room with us. It was a tame tortoise of a very small size, and which I first discovered by accidentally kicking the poor creature hard against the wall. It did not seem to mind this misadventure, however. Nor would it submit to be expelled from our apartment. I put it gently outside more than once, bidding it seek a chamber less densely inhabited. But it would not be banished. I never entered the room without seeing it prowling forlornly about the dirty floor, or hearing it under one of the beds. In the night, too, it continued its dreary perambulation. It must have been a sort of metamorphosis of the Wandering Jew. More probably it found our room an excellent sort of larder. It certainly did, if its tastes were in the direction of fleas and earwigs.

Thus settled in the hotel, I was free to explore little Iviza. I rambled there and then up the steep streets of the city to the fort and ecclesiastical buildings on the summit of the rock, some four hundred feet above the hotel. On the way it behoved me to cross a drawbridge, and then ascend by a mass of narrow streets with high, white, small-windowed houses on either hand. The Moorish character of the city still lingers in it. Some of the pretty horse-shoe windows and slender marble columns to them, and the open arcades which sprang from the houses, were worthy of Algiers or Tunis. Flowers and

creeping plants added much to the beauty of these old Iviza houses.

Almost at every turn I came across an old church. Anciently the population of Iviza was greater than at present; or else these churches were merely monastic appanages. I was never in such dismal places of worship. To begin with, their gloom was such that at first it was necessary to grope in the aisles rather by faith than sight. Then the antique paintings on their walls and the altar decorations were so hideous and crude. To be sure, they were in many instances utterly spoiled by time and weather. But their bad drawing and colouring were still plainly discernible.

These defects were most noticeable in the side chapels. The families to which these chapels used to belong are nowadays mostly extinct. Only their flat tombstones sunk in the pavement testify by their stately heraldic bearings (Spaniards have a passion for this sort of thing) to their past magnificence. The inscription on one of them stays in my mind, and might be applied to many English families, as well as this in the chapel dedicated to Saint Domingo: "Sum qui sum, et non quod eram."

In this same church I remarked the portly size of the alms-box at the door. Instead of petitioning on behalf of the souls in purgatory, or the Holy Land—a favourite claim in the Balearics—this box was for the foundlings of Iviza. While I was looking at it I heard a faint hollow cough. I had not previously observed that the church possessed a mouldy dilapidated gallery, closely grated. Behind the grating I now remarked the pale face of a nun, and even as I peered up at her she broke into the drowsy monotonous hum of worship which characterises the conventual form of religion.

Foundlings are commonplace little mortals in Iviza. I half expected, when looking in another direction, to see the mural aperture whence the sisters of Saint Domingo were accustomed to receive these little offerings of live humanity.

Thus deviously ascending by dark portals, which opened into gloom and cobwebs, and by infrequent little shops with cooling doves in their precincts, I came upon the restricted summit "plaza," a pocket square, with the old Government house on one side of it, the church opposite, and the bishop's palace on the third side of the square. The last faced

the north, where there was a clear prospect of the housetops of Iviza, the lagoon, and the gay green gardens and fields of the interior.

Two hearty priests were here pacing between the old Government house and the church, each with a devotional book in his hand. They looked at their books, and then at the broad panorama, and anon they recurred to their books and the panorama. It seemed to me that they could not have found a more inspiring perch, whether for religious or intellectual exercises. The massive doorway of the old court-house of Iviza was worth seeing. The date, 1503, over the portal proclaimed its antiquity, as well as the fine Gothic curtain of stone beneath the date.

They have a convenient habit here in Iviza of labelling every building of importance. The stranger cannot go wrong. In England he may enter a hall of justice in the belief that is a cathedral, or ring a bell in Grosvenor Square under the absurd fancy that the house is the British Museum. But Iviza has enamelled plates for all its edifices. Even the principal church is labelled "cathedral," and the prison, the episcopal palace, and the courts of justice are all indicated in a like manner. I wondered the great yellow-brown walls which gird the old city were not in like manner ticketed "fortifications."

This, however, is, it may be, because in spite of their enormous bulk they can no longer claim to be of much use. Of their kind I have seldom seen such walls; they give an exceedingly stern air to the houses which are unfortunate enough to stand under their shadow. One must climb on to their neglected angles and lunettes—thick in grass and flowers—and get astride one of the dismantled guns among the sheep here browsing, to thoroughly appreciate the tone of this desolation. In the evening the Iviza children play about the spaces, in no small danger of falling over the cracked battlements a hundred feet down upon a nether house top. The modern tourist may visit Iviza with a camera without imperilling his liberty. Guns and walls are all at his service, and very engaging will be some of the photographs he may thus obtain.

I stayed on the rocks of upper Iviza until the sun began to sink towards the island of Formentera. Then I descended to the unclean inn of Don John, and ate my dinner with a various company—judge and advocates, a gendee, and commercial

men. It was entertaining to learn among these Spaniards that the popular idea of an Englishman is that he is a very proud fellow.

The Iviza wine is decidedly strong. The judge, who was here for the assize, did not know which was the worse—the Iviza wine or the Iviza people. He, too, poor old gentleman, had been given a bed-fellow in his room, and he did not like it a bit. Had he had an innkeeper less high-minded than Don John to deal with, it was clear to me that he would have said a great many naughty, explosive words. As it was, he merely muttered them; and when the landlord asked him how he liked the "puchero," or the tough leg of a hen which he had just tried in vain to eat, he answered quickly that all was admirable; Iviza was charming. If only, he sighed the next minute, there were fewer rogues in the island! Then he might hope to get his judicial work over a day or two earlier.

After dinner I patrolled the dusky Marina with my cigar, and came in peril of stepping into the lagoon where the large sewer falls into it. The evening smells were very bad; they even dominated the aroma of my tobacco. But there was the romantic melody of a guitar from an upper window of Iviza, which made me less mindful of this nuisance than I might have been.

Of my two bedroom companions, one was very deaf. The other was an agreeable young merchant from Barcelona; and, presuming upon our comrade's deafness, he told me much about Iviza and the Ivicenes while we lay abed, waiting for the time when the hotel fleas had supped themselves into a state of inoffensive coma. The scraping of the tortoise and the ticking of the clock were further hindrances to sleep.

The next day broke fair and cloudless, and Don John, civil man, hobbled off to secure a carriage for me while I ate my breakfast. A Spanish breakfast is a simple meal. Here, in the Balearics, it consists of a little cup of chocolate and a peculiarly porous rich kind of bun, called an "ensaimada," which you soak in the chocolate. The ensaimadas in no two houses seemed to me alike. Some were distressingly rich, and made with olive oil of a suspicious quality. Others, on the contrary, were poverty-stricken, doughy compositions, which soon cloyed the unaccustomed palate. On the whole, the "ensaimada" is a plea-

sant feature of the table in the Balearica. For my part, I used to astonish myself by eating two of them at a sitting.

The carriage was an unpretentious two-wheeled cart, without springs, painted red, and drawn by a large-boned horse with a long mane. I did not expect much comfort from a fifty-kilometre drive in such a vehicle; but I was pleasantly disillusioned. The Iviza high road to San Juan, at the north of the island, is worthy of a larger land.

It was not a sensational excursion; but it was sufficiently instructive. I traversed the interior of the island almost from end to end. On either hand, though at varying distances, the pine-clad hills rose prettily, hiding the sea. In places they exceeded a thousand feet in height, and were dense enough, I was assured, to give fair cover to wild boar. They also served their purpose as a protection for the plainland from the rough storms of winter. This was shown by the square miles of almond-trees and fig and orange-trees which we passed. Iviza is notorious for its fruit. An immense tract was pointed out to me in process of reclamation from marsh and commonplace herbs. The almond-trees were being planted in interminable rows, and the eye rebelled against the uniformity of the tree trunks. But evidently, as my driver said, there was much money in it.

We stopped once on the way. This was at a considerable store and wine-shop, where two roads met. The thoughtful Don John had given the driver his orders on the subject. I had expressed some curiosity about the different wines of Iviza. I was here to be indulged with a special liquor, much resembling Moscatel, and which was pressed from one of Don John's own vineyards in the neighbourhood.

Then we kept straight on until we came to the foot of the hills in the north. Half-a-dozen white houses were here clustered about a white church. This was the village of San Juan. The district is so ill-taught that there is but one school for one thousand nine hundred and ninety-two boys, and one for two thousand two hundred and forty-six girls, in the parish. This average compares deplorably with the advantages even of Iviza city, where four hundred and seventy-one boys and six hundred and eighty-two girls are the numbers to each school respectively.

But I did not find San Juan so barbarous a place as this illiteracy would seem to

indicate it. On the contrary, I was struck by the ready courtesy of the black-coated little boys who came to see what our apparition meant. At the inn, too—though it is rather a store and a wine-shop—I encountered much amiability. The landlord urged me to drink as much wine as I pleased. The weather was hot, and here at San Juan, the lizards were flashing about the roadway. I, therefore, drank freely. But when it came to payment, the honest man drew himself up. He would have none of it. I was a stranger; he, as a resident of San Juan, was proud to give me what little indulgence he could. So much for San Juan's backwardness in the way of civilisation.

The church was insignificant. From it I wandered into an adjacent building, which proved to be the residence of the Vicar. I asked the ill-featured dame, whom I here saw laying a table, to give me water. Straightway she sped to her master, and a moment afterwards the priest appeared and pressed me in the kindest way to share his noonday meal. The soup came in hot at the instant; there was a well-cooked ragout, fruit, cheese, and coffee. The wine, like that of the inn, was excellent. My host was not very well-informed on worldly matters—how should he be? But there was such a glow of genuine benevolence on his elderly countenance when he spoke of his life and parish that I did not wonder priestly influence in Iviza is so strong.

We drove back to Iviza in the afternoon, making a circuit to visit the village of San Eulalia on the eastern coast. This is a really charming spot—the church on a crag which must at one time have been the site of a fortress. But the road down to it was shocking. We slid over great slabs of rock, and did about as much in the way of adventurousness as was possible without upsetting. By this route we saw much grain land, as well as uncultivated heath. As a matter of fact, not less than about thirty per cent. of the island area is devoted to cereals and vegetables. Nearly as much remains untilled, and the remainder is divided between forests and fruit trees. Of the latter, carobs, figs, and almonds are in the largest proportion.

My second day in Iviza was devoted to a somewhat audacious pedestrian tour in the south of the island. I say audacious, not because of bandits or the unknown terrors of that part of the island. Oh, dear no! It was the heat, and nothing

else, which made the undertaking a bold one. But I had made up my mind, and I went through with it.

Very charming it was, too, until noon drew near. For the first three miles I skirted the sea, walking on the hard white sand of a great bay. The temptation to bathe was irresistible. I had the country far inland to myself; and afterwards, when I reached the hills where they rise by the edge jutting towards Formentera, I turned into the interior, and found myself by Iviza's most important industrial works, to wit, the saline.

There are many salines in the Mediterranean, and they are all of much the same character. You must imagine an extent of low land adjacent to the sea, and subject to inundation at high tide or spring tides. Here the salt water is detained by artificial means, and the crystals are soon secured by evaporation. The huge pyramids of salt which stand about the salines are very genuine proofs of wealth. In Iviza, for example, there was at this time a Norwegian vessel loading salt, after depositing a cargo of codfish for the consistent Catholics of the land.

There is nothing picturesque about a saline. This of Iviza, too, seemed to be more than commonly pestilential. The smells of the half dried ooze of the contiguous marshes and dykes were very bad indeed. The latter teemed with excited small green frogs. They were jumping about in the semi-consolidated mud by thousands, and croaking as nothing but a frog in the spring of the year can croak. In the distance men were at work wheeling the salt to and from the stacks. Several score of Ivicenes find good and constant employment here. Indeed, the Iviza saline is so notoriously rich a corporation that its one-pound notes—twenty-five pesetas—pass current in all the isles.

I do not forget my six-mile walk back to the city. The weather was exceedingly torrid for the time of the year. Of shelter here there was none. The white track of the indifferent road glowed with a terrible intensity. It was a day fit only for grasshoppers and lizards, both of which were much to the front. I was thus glad indeed when again I came under the shadow of the huge walls of the city and made my way, palpitating with heat, into the cool, odoriferous chamber of Don John's inn. The worthy gentleman rated me soundly for demeaning myself by going off afoot,

and summoned me to a meal with much peremptoriness.

That evening there was rejoicing at Don John's dinner-table, loud and unrestrained. The judge and his attendant advocates had got through their work. If they were to be believed they had shown but scant mercy to the poor knaves who, for their crimes, had been brought before them. They seemed to think the only way to reform Iviza was to sink it beneath the blue waves of the Mediterranean. They would have even been more content if all the felons in jail had escaped and followed the example of their more fortunate brethren in fleeing to Algiers to avoid the majesty of the law. In short, they behaved almost rudely, and made Don John twitch his lip viciously more than twice while he helped the "puchero."

The weekly steamer from Alicante was to arrive in the evening. Judge and advocates were to journey on by it to Palma. I also proposed to do the same—not exactly ill-content to leave the poor little island. But the steamer was very late, and it seemed that one might, without danger, try to get a little asleep before preparing for the brief voyage. With this intention I stumbled over the compassionate tortoise for the last time, and lay down on my bed with a cigarette between my lips. I suppose I drowsed a little, for it was not until about eleven o'clock—a late hour in Iviza—that I heard Don John's voice calling me by name, and interposing a "caramba!" or two of despair when he received no answer.

He called so loudly that he awoke my deaf friend in the bed with the green counterpane, who in his turn also shouted to me. Thus disturbed, I took my last glass of Don John's wine, paid him my bill of a dollar a day, wished him a very hearty farewell, which is likely to be eternal, and hurried down to the pier, where the last boat was just putting off. The judge was in it, with the red light of a cigar between his teeth. We were wished a pleasant voyage by several voices in the dark, and then we stole over the quiet, starlit water towards the steamer, which, six hours later, set us ashore in Palma.

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the judge when he landed in this city of sixty thousand inhabitants, with as many of the luxuries of civilisation as are good even for an accomplished epicure.

But for my part I think a man might do worse for himself than periodically spend a week or two in backward little Iviza.

THE RED ROOM.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

It was a generally known and accepted fact that there was one room at Marsden Manor which was always kept shut up, and never occupied under any press of circumstances. What made it all the stranger was that the room—it was a bedroom—was a commodious and well-situated apartment in the north wing; and yet it was never used, no one ever slept there—not even at those festal seasons when the house was fullest, and every cubic foot of accommodation was made the most of.

Lady Marsden might shake her head helplessly, and wonder where they were going to put all the people; and Sir Richard might rumple his hair, and talk vaguely of “shakedowns”; but never for one moment was it suggested to make use of the Red Room.

Sometimes, perhaps, Lady Marsden would venture so far as to remark:

“What a pity it is——”

Then she generally broke off with a little shiver, and the sentence was rarely, if ever, concluded.

Sir Richard, who knew exactly what was passing through her mind, would usually reply:

“Yes, confound it! but of course it’s quite out of the question.”

And then Lady Marsden would exclaim:

“Oh, Richard!” with another shiver, and the subject would be dropped until a similar emergency arose.

The Marsdens were an old family, and Marsden Manor dated back to—well, the particular century is not material; but it was a very old house, to which such occasional additions had been made as taste or convenience called for. The Red Room, as has been already stated, was situated in the north wing. It was a large, gloomy-looking chamber, with heavy, old-fashioned furniture. There was—as might have been expected—the once inevitable four-post bedstead, together with antique bureaux and other appurtenances, all after the same style; while whatever of colour the room contained was red—deep, dark, dingy red—a red which was nearly black in some lights, and in others

showed patches of a brighter and almost ensanguined hue.

Was the room haunted then, or what was the reason that it was never called upon to shelter any of the many guests who came and went?

The Manor was an old house, and, as is the case with most old houses, had more than one story and tradition hanging about its weather-beaten walls. What, then, was the particular mystery in connection with the Red Room?

That was a secret which was known to few, or, to speak more correctly, it was perhaps really known to no one. All that even the privileged few knew was, that more than a century ago a terrible tragedy had taken place which had caused that apartment to be regarded with abhorrence, so that for many years it was shut up and never entered. Then, as time passed, and the memory of what had taken place became dim and far away, if not actually discredited, the room was swept and garnished, and once more made ready for an occupant. But only for a single night. The next morning this same individual was found to have slept his last sleep on earth. He was found lying dead upon the bed with strange marks upon him; and again the room was closed, and remained so for a long time.

Then, again, as the memory of the second tragedy became faint and blurred, or was explained away and attributed to mere natural causes, the room was prepared and taken possession of by a youthful sceptic, who snapped his fingers mentally and physically at the unseen or the supernatural, and retired to rest one night full of health and spirits. And he, too, was found dead in his bed?

Oh, no! He was alive next morning, but—well, he was never quite sane afterwards. He was found crouched in a corner, between the bed and the wall, with both hands claspings his throat, as though to protect it from something, and with several long, red, raw marks, like scratches, disfiguring his face.

He lived—or rather existed—for some years after this, being never sufficiently sensible at any time to be able to explain in any way the cause of the terrible affliction which had befallen him, nor even, until the very last, to utter a single connected sentence—and the scratches never healed.

One day the end came, and just at the last a glimmer of light appeared to penetrate the long-darkened understanding.

He looked round at those who were standing near and smiled. Then a sudden unspeakable horror convulsed his countenance, and he uttered the first coherent sentence which had been known to pass his lips since he had been so sadly and strangely smitten.

"That long brown arm!" he cried.

Then he fell back shuddering and died.

This last event took place some dozen years before my story opens and before the present baronet succeeded to the title, but the memory of it still haunted the Red Room, and caused it to be shunned even by those whose acquaintance with the circumstances was of the faintest and least reliable nature.

Still the present Lady Marsden, who was a notable housewife, insisted on having the room kept aired and in some sort of order, a duty which was anything but relished by those upon whom it devolved; for it is hardly necessary to add that the fact of there being something "queer" about the Red Room was an open secret to the domestic staff at the Manor. So it went on until October having come round again, and the Manor being as usual, full of guests, Sir Richard one morning received a letter, the perusal of which caused him to knit his brows and mutter sundry exclamations, such as: "Confound it all! If I'd only known sooner! What on earth is to be done now?" etc., etc.

This same letter, the advent of which caused its recipient so much perturbation, bore the address of a London hotel and ran as follows:

"MY DEAR DICK—Here I am back again in the old country, and glad enough, too, I can tell you. After all, though, the old country would be nothing without the old friends, and there is one old friend, at least, from whom I believe I may safely reckon on receiving a welcome at any time and under any circumstances. This being the case, and bearing in mind your often repeated injunction never to wait for an invitation, I am merely sending you a line to warn you that I am about to claim your hospitality once more, and hope to be with you in a few hours from the receipt of this letter.—Very truly yours,

"HENRY VERNON."

Sir Richard read the letter through more than once, keeping up all the time a running fire of exclamations such as have been chronicled. Then, as though he

found these an altogether inadequate mode of expression, he began to swear softly.

To him entered Lady Marsden, who, at once perceiving the air to be highly charged with electricity, enquired:

"What is the matter, dear?"

"Matter enough!" exclaimed Sir Richard. "Here, read this!" thrusting the letter into her hand. "Here's my old chum, Hal Vernon, who has only just returned to England after a couple of years' absence, writes to say that we may expect him almost immediately, and not so much as a bed of any sort to offer him. It's the most confoundedly awkward and annoying business that could possibly have happened. Here am I with a house full of people, half of whom I don't care a rap for, and not a vacant hole or corner left for the oldest friend I've got. I declare I should like to take and bundle some of those chaps out neck and crop."

Lady Marsden agreed, readily enough, that it was most awkward and annoying, but was unable to see any way out of it.

"Hang it all!" went on Sir Richard. "It's all my own fault. Whatever possessed me to invite that man, Barker, who hardly knows one end of a gun from the other, in spite of his tall talk, and that young muff, Cattermole, and two or three others? I suppose I couldn't give any of 'em a hint? No, of course not. But what on earth am I to do? It's not as though it was any one else, but Vernon——"

And Sir Richard broke off and stamped about the room with vexation. Lady Marsden looked sympathetic as she handed him back the letter.

"I'm sure I am quite as much put out as you, Richard. You know Major Vernon is one of my favourites; but there is absolutely nowhere that we could put him, unless——" She looked at her husband meaningly. "But, no, of course it is of no use thinking of that," with a little shiver.

"Eh, what?" said Sir Richard, evidently struck by the same thought. "Ah, yes, of course, that would be a way out of the difficulty; but, as you say, it's quite out of the question."

He was absently turning the letter over and over in his fingers.

"I suppose there's nothing for it but to——" "Hullo! Why, what's this? A postscript, by Jove, and I never noticed it."

He read it first to himself and then aloud, the irritated expression he was

wearing gradually giving way to one of astonishment as he did so.

"By Jove," he cried, "what a singular coincidence! I suppose," addressing his wife, "that since he proposes it himself we may as well agree to it? After all, you know," waxing confident as he spoke, "I never could see any earthly reason why we should give in to an old family fable in the way we have done all along."

"No earthly reason," repeated Lady Marsden emphatically; "well, perhaps not—however, you must do as you please, but for my part——"

Here she was interrupted by one or two of the earlier risers among the guests strolling in in search of breakfast, and had to turn her attention to matters of an undoubtedly earthly tendency.

The postscript which had produced such a change in the condition of affairs was a very simple one:

"If, as is not unlikely to be the case at this particular season, you should happen to be short of house-room, pray remember that I am well accustomed to rough it, and if there should be—as I believe there is—such a thing as a haunted room at the Manor, I shall be more than satisfied with such accommodation, as I am quite sure that no ghost will care to trouble itself about an old soldier like myself."

So for the third time was the Red Room made ready, after a long interval, to receive a guest.

The two women servants who were told off to perform this duty did not bring any very great willingness to bear upon the task. Still it was done, and the room looked fairly cheerful with a fire burning upon the hearth—for the day was dull and chilly—though by the time that everything was completed it was nearly dusk. Gathering up their dusters and brushes, the maids were preparing to leave the room when one of them, turning sharply round, demanded of the other:

"What did you do that for?"

"Do what?" was the equally tart reply.

"I didn't do nothing."

"Then who was it pulled my hair?"

The two women looked at each other in silence for a few seconds; then, with one accord, hurried from the room.

Major Vernon arrived before dinner. He was a tall, bronzed, wiry-looking man, who appeared as though nothing less than a cannon-ball would make any serious impression on him. He was received by his host with as much effusion as the ave-

rage well-bred Englishman is capable of evincing—that is to say, the latter made a pump-handle of his friend's arm and remarked:

"How are you, old man? I'm most confoundedly glad to see you."

To which the other replied:

"Same to you, Dick. What sort of a bag did you make to-day?"

"Oh, fairish," was the answer; "the birds were rather wild. By-the-bye, we've given you the room you mentioned. My wife was very much against it at first, but as it was your own suggestion, and there really wasn't another vacant——"

"Good heavens, man; don't apologise!" was the interruption. "Why, what could I wish better? Besides," with a laugh, "you don't suppose this is the first time in my life I've occupied a so-called haunted chamber? I've never found my rest in the least disturbed in consequence."

A little later and the Major was inspecting his quarters by the aid of the firelight, and that of the wax candles upon his dressing-table.

"Humph! A comfortable enough room, though gloomy—a fact which may be attributed to the bedstead and the sombre character of the hangings. I wonder," with a semi-sarcastic smile, as he surveyed his surroundings, "what particular form the apparition, or whatever it may be called, takes? What's that picture?"

He strode across, candle in hand, to the fireplace, over which hung a large dark oil-painting in a massive tarnished frame. So blackened was it by time and other deteriorating agents that he had a little difficulty in making it out to be a landscape of some sort. Still, a landscape it was undoubtedly.

"Humph!" he remarked to himself again. "I thought it might have been a portrait—the portrait of the ghost who is supposed to have a fancy for this particular apartment. It seems rather a pity it should be only a landscape after all." He laughed aloud, but checked himself almost immediately. "What strange echoes there always are in these old houses," he said.

It was very late when he re-entered the room. He came in yawning.

"Confound those fellows in the smoking-room," he grumbled, "keeping me up to this hour! I shall be shooting all over the place to-morrow."

He had, for the time being, entirely forgotten the associations of the room until his eye was somehow attracted towards the

old dark oil-painting over the mantelpiece, and, sleepy as he was, was nevertheless instigated to take up the candle and again examine it.

To his amazement the light revealed to him something quite different to what he expected.

"I could have sworn it was a landscape," he exclaimed as he passed the candle backwards and forwards in front of it. "I remember saying to myself that it was a pity it was not a portrait, and, lo and behold, it is a portrait—the portrait of a woman, and a confoundedly unpleasant specimen of the sex she is, too. Foreign, I should say by the complexion, not particularly young, and with about the most malicious expression I have ever seen on any countenance."

He held the light higher.

"Look at that arm! What a long, skinny, brown-looking limb—and the hand, with those long pointed nails, is more like the claw of some bird of prey than anything human. It is very strange—very strange indeed," he mused, "for I could have taken my oath that it was a landscape earlier in the evening, and I have had nothing but one brandy and soda since dinner. Perhaps—but it's hardly likely—they may have changed the picture for some reason or other! In which case I consider it decidedly an alteration for the worse. For of all the she-devils I have ever seen depicted on canvas, this one beats the lot. Do you hear what I say, my lady?"

He nodded mockingly at the portrait, and the painted eyes glared back, while the curved fingers with their long claw-like nails seemed to make ready to strike.

He turned away yawning more than ever.

"By Jove, how sleepy I am!"

Half an hour—an hour passed, during which the dropping of the cinders in the grate and the deep breathing of the sleeper in the old four-post bedstead were the only sounds that broke the silence.

Gradually there came a change.

The fire died out upon the hearth, and as the room grew darker and darker, so the slumberer's rest became troubled, and he began to toss, and turn, and mutter incoherently.

HOMES AT THE ANTIPODES.

MOVE the island of Britain into a more climate; give her a purer, drier

atmosphere, soils as rich and varied, scenery as romantic, but on a grander scale; surround her with seas less stormy, but equally prolific in fish, and there you have New Zealand, which might well have been called New Britain, but for some Dutch navigator, who thus misnamed it after his dear native region of flat shores, sea-fogs, and flounders. Some, again, would compare New Zealand to Italy, which it curiously resembles in shape, only that the leg of the boot is severed from the foot, thus forming two islands with a fine stretch of inland sea between the severed portions. And, with natural topsyturviness, the north of the Pacific Italy represents the south of the European land, with volcanoes even more active, and a sub-tropical climate where flourishes a rich vegetation with all the fruits and products of the most favoured regions. The southern island—which is called the Middle Island, with as much propriety as England might be because it lies between Ireland and the Isle of Wight—boasts of a magnificent chain of mountains that rival the Alps of Northern Italy in grandeur and sublimity. And these New Zealand mountains break off on the south-west in a coast-line of the grandest features, with sounds and bays, glaciers and magnificent waterfalls, little visited and offering unexplored recesses and unconquered peaks to the adventurous mountaineer and explorer.

But here the contour of the South Island strongly suggests England on a larger scale—the east coast flat, and backed by rich, fertile plains, adapted for the growth of cereals and all the operations of agriculture, while the country gradually rises in a succession of terraces to the mountain regions of the west. The climate, too, is that of England, only drier and more genial. Winter brings frost, and sometimes a sprinkling of snow; but the frosts are not severe, and the general temperature in winter is mild and equable. There are no voracious animals—unless the rabbit be so considered—no venomous reptiles; while all the most useful and serviceable animals of Europe seem to flourish with increased vitality in their adopted country. It is above all others the country for sheep, and its rich pastures, where rich English grasses have replaced the thin natural grasses of the country, are covered with innumerable flocks.

The merino sheep occupies the higher and wilder ranges of pasture; the Lincoln

and Romney Marsh feed on the rich, moist soils; while the drier lands are occupied by the best breeds of the Leicester variety. But the land is equally well adapted, much of it, for dairy farming, and before long, perhaps, New Zealand butter will be as well known as Danish or Dorset in the English market.

The northern island has its own special and marvellous features. Here is the sanatorium of New Zealand: its region of geysers and hot springs, with waters direct from Nature's laboratory, and charged with the most powerful constituents. Surprising cures have been effected in these hot mineral-water baths. Cripples have cast away their crutches, and those arriving bent together with rheumatic pains have departed erect and sound. Here, too, is the great centre of volcanic activity, once noted for its marvellous pink and white terraces as if of alabaster, with lakes and cascades of the most fairy-like character; but since the volcanic outbreak of 1886—which swept away all these charming natural embellishments—the scene is of a more stern and gloomy character.

This, too, is the country of the Maori, who have a great reserve of land in the centre of the island, and who now seem prosperous and contented, and not likely ever to be a source of danger to European colonists, although they fought stubbornly and bravely against the English power in times gone by. Here also is the fruit country. The land about Auckland, for instance, seems to be admirably adapted for fruit culture. The olive and the vine are to be found in perfection; orange and lemon-trees flourish and furnish good crops. Where the soil is mingled with volcanic tufa, and the hills are now almost barren and valueless, there seems a promise of future vineyards to rival those of Burgundy or Languedoc.

The mineral wealth, too, of New Zealand is known to be considerable, although as yet not fully explored. Gold is plentifully distributed both in alluvial deposits and in veins in the quartz reefs, and native gold to the value of more than a million was exported in 1891. But there are also indications of future wealth in veins of copper, tin, zinc, lead, and of many other valuable ores. Extensive coal-fields are already worked to advantage, and ninety thousand pounds' worth was exported to the Australian colonies last year, although English seaborne coal is imported to a rather larger extent. A curious source of wealth,

too, is found in the Kauri gum, exported yearly to the value of nearly half a million. The kauri-tree is the native pine, from which exudes a congealed turpentine, useful for many purposes in arts and crafts generally. But the supply from growing trees is insignificant and of small commercial value. But there exist in the North Island remains of extinct forests buried beneath the soil, among which are found great masses of this strange substance, and gum-hunting is a regular occupation, the hunter armed simply with a spear for probing the ground and a spade for digging up the gum when he has found it.

Another source of wealth is the growth of a curious native *Phormium*, a plant rich in fibre, something between flax and hemp, and which is worked up in mills and freed from its sticky properties, and then exported to the value of two hundred and eighty thousand pounds annually, as material for making twine and ropes. There is fortune waiting for any one who can invent suitable machinery for the treatment of this somewhat refractory leaf.

But in dealing with New Zealand topics, mutton is monarch, and the clip of wool and the production of "freezers" make rain and fine weather there, whatever the climatic conditions. There is something slightly unfeeling in speaking of a sheep, or perhaps a lamb, alive and friking over the herbage, as a "freezer," but that is the colonial way of designating a breed of sheep adapted for being exported in a frozen condition. To develop a perfect freezer is the ambition of the scientific stock-breeder, and excellent as is the quality of the bulk of New Zealand mutton brought to England in a frozen state, every effort is being made to attain something like perfection. The frozen meat trade has entirely come into existence within the last dozen years. Before then New Zealand might have been characterised in the Scotch manner as "a 'oo" or all wool. Sheep-farming meant the production of wool, and the carcasses of the sheep might have been classed as "waste products" to be boiled down into tallow, or boiled a trifle less into "tinned meat," with no great profit from either process. Then, in 1881 the experiment was tried of filling up a sailing vessel with freezing chambers, and exporting frozen mutton to England. The experiment proved successful, and in the face of some English prejudice, and in

spite of some costly mistakes, the trade grew and increased so that, according to the official "Handbook of New Zealand," from which most of the foregoing facts and figures have been taken, the export of frozen meat amounted in 1891 to the value of one million, one hundred and ninety-four thousand, seven hundred and twenty-four pounds.

The sheep farmer, it seems, finds that he can deliver his sheep, with a fair profit, for twopence a pound at the nearest port or freezing point. The killing and freezing process is undertaken chiefly by companies, who have established freezing stations at various convenient points along the coast, and who ship the carcasses, consigned to agents in London or elsewhere. One of the sights of the day at the Albert Docks is the arrival of one of the New Zealand Shipping Company's fine steamers, perhaps the "Tongariro" or the "Rimutaka," or some other of the fleet with the sonorous Maori names, and to see the subsequent discharge of some twenty-seven thousand carcasses each neatly wrapped in its winding-sheet of white calico. The whole year's exportation now figures to about two million frozen carcasses, and is rapidly increasing. Yet with all this depletion the number of sheep in the colony is rapidly increasing. The flocks have largely increased in number, and the export of wool has risen from about sixty-four million pounds in 1882, to a hundred and eight millions in 1891.

New Zealand, indeed, after a long period of depression, is making rapid strides in prosperity. There is no great inflation, no rapid building up of great cities—the biggest town in the whole colony shows a population under fifty thousand; but a general well-being is diffused through the whole community. New Zealand cousins turn up in London fresh and smiling. They buy grand pianos, pictures, picture-books; they go the tour of Europe. It is the shepherd-kings who are having their turn among the wonders of Egypt. But your New Zealander does not boast of his wealth, he is more likely to sigh and deplore the excesses of the rabbits among his sheep-runs.

For the rabbit is the one bitter drop in the cup of New Zealand's prosperity, the gift of the uninvited fairy which threatens to spoil all the rest. The prolific bunny is only to be kept under by unremitting energy of destruction. Everything else in the way of acclimatisation seems to have

answered well, and, after all, the rabbit is only an example of too much success. A curious instance, by the way, was the introduction of English clover, when it proved that none of the New Zealand insects were able to fertilise the flower, and English humble-bees had to be brought over for the purpose, when both bees and clover began to flourish wonderfully well. Again, amongst the curiosities of New Zealand is the rapid growth of fungus on felled timber in certain of the new bush settlements. After the trees have been cut down and the logs fired, the growth of fungus commences. It is gathered, dried, and imported to the value of from ten thousand pounds to twenty thousand pounds annually, being relished by the Chinese both as food and medicine.

Now this beautiful and fertile country of New Zealand, something larger than Great Britain, and with many natural advantages over even our own favoured land, is enjoyed by a population very little larger than that contained in the metropolitan districts of Southwark and Lambeth. The exact figures are, according to the census of 1891: New Zealand, six hundred and sixty-eight thousand six hundred and fifty-one; Southwark and Lambeth, six hundred and fourteen thousand one hundred and ninety-five. It is quite evident that there is room for a few more in New Zealand; but nobody would propose nor would the colony accept a general emigration from Southwark and Lambeth. Town-bred people would starve in such a country. But what a fine field is here presented to the depressed agriculture of the kingdom in general! How many good English farmers are weary of the hopeless task of struggling with inclement seasons, with crops failing and uncertain, with heavy burdens in all directions! Well, here is the very promised land for a farmer if he has not lost everything in the gulf of that "old Manor Farm." Even the wreck of his fortunes will ensure him comfort and competency, if not wealth. The country, no doubt, will seem strange at first. The most skilful English farmer will have a good deal to learn and unlearn. The seasons are all topsy-turvy, the ways of going about all different. Planted in an uncleared bush farm, it will seem as if rather a forester was wanted than a farmer. To fell the trees, to burn the worthless part of the timber, and to convert the forest into a grass farm by sprinkling grass seed over

the virgin soil, innocent of any preparation, or of other dressing than the burnt wood, all this will seem strange work to the practised English agriculturist, and the sight of his meadows bristling with tree-stumps will, perhaps, cause him a pang as he recalls the rich, smooth sward of the six-acre meadows on the old farm. But in a social way he will be quite at home. He may serve again as churchwarden or as deacon of his chapel. He will find good schools for his children and colleges for the more advanced, and institutions in general like those he has left behind, but in a simpler, less costly form.

For any young fellow who has some knowledge of sheep or cattle, or who is a judge of a horse, whether it be the Squire's son, the farmer's son, or the son of the village vet., there is a career to be found in New Zealand, given a fair amount of energy and steadiness of purpose.

But especially of the working population of the agricultural districts, who in England are leaving the country everywhere for the town, could the stream of emigration only be diverted to New Zealand, what a valuable class they would form, especially if established in village communities of the type which is now being established in the colonies! The skilled labourer of the fields is there in full demand; he can acquire land, too, on the easiest of terms, and form a homestead where he can end his days in comfort and plenty. And there are no frozen-out labourers in the new country; work goes on in the open air all the year round. Cattle are not housed for the winter, the mild seasons call for no special precautions against cold. There is work, too, for woodmen in the great forests, and the business of sawing up timbers is good and flourishing.

The enterprise and energy of the New Zealanders is shown in the establishment of fine lines of steamers and sailing ships. The Union Steamship Company keep up constant communication with Australia, Tasmania, and San Francisco, and the New Zealand Shipping Company runs a monthly service of steamers to and from the mother country, with passengers and mails, and always full cargoes of "freezers." A private company have an equally good monthly service, the route in both cases being to England by Cape Horn, Rio, Teneriffe, Madeira, Plymouth, Gravesend, and returning by the Cape of Good Hope. The Shipping Company have also a fine fleet of sailing vessels, which for cargo are

often more profitable than the steamers. Then there is a considerable trade round the coast and about their Pacific seas and islands. And fishing on the coast would probably prove highly remunerative were there a seafaring population to carry it on.

Nor need the English emigrant, whose labour is his only capital, fear the competition of pauper emigration, or of cheap imported coolie labour. Though New Zealand is near enough to China to be overrun with Celestials, were they allowed to settle there, the New Zealanders refuse to have them at any price. The expression is hardly correct, for on "planking down" a heavy poll-tax John Chinaman is allowed to land on New Zealand shores. Thus Chinese immigration is practically stopped, and, although about four thousand Chinese still remain in the colony, the number is gradually diminishing. Some will say that in thus excluding the Chinese we are only "sitting on the safety-valve," and that the danger of a general rush of the swarming millions of China from a country that is perishing under their feet, and the overwhelming of European civilisation by the pressure of countless myriads, is not quite a visionary danger.

But New Zealand is not quite unprepared for invasion. It has its permanent militia and a good corps of volunteers—horse and foot—with artillery, naval artillery, and engineers. Its forts are armed with thirteen-ton and five-ton Elswick guns, with other powerful guns of recent pattern, and quick-firing guns of the newest types. The volunteer field artillery are armed with breechloading Armstrong rifled guns, and a torpedo corps is kept on a permanent footing, with a good stock of Whiteheads and other torpedoes, and four Thornycroft torpedo boats for coast and river service. And doubtless the colony would give a good account of itself in case of any attempted "coup-de-main."

The colony has good roads, with a capital service of coaches between places out of the reach of railways. But two thousand miles of railways have already been constructed, and afford easy communication between the principal centres of population.

Finally, every intending emigrant should possess a copy of the New Zealand Handbook, containing a great mass of the vital statistics of the colony, and good information under almost every possible head. The miner, the farmer, the grazier, the

prospector and adventurer of every kind will find something to his purpose; and it may be had for eighteenpence from the office of the Agent-General for New Zealand, at number thirteen, Victoria Street, Westminster.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alicia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIII. ONE MORE CHANCE.

ABOUT two hours later Frank Thorne pulled up his dogcart at Church Corner, and gave the signal whistle which had been agreed upon. Geoffrey came out of the house and got in behind, Frank driving cautiously off along the snowy, slippery road. Lucy, enjoying the cold night air—or early morning, rather—twisted her head in her wraps, and asked what Maggie had said about the ball. Had she enjoyed herself?

"Looked as if she did, by Jove!" mumbled Frank. "She was a popular character."

"She was very tired," Geoffrey said rather shortly. "When I asked her if she had enjoyed it, she told me to ask other people. I suppose she meant you."

"Well," Lucy said, "she looked very pretty and danced a great deal. I think it was nice of her to come home so early. Don't think I should, if I had been a girl like her. I couldn't think where she was till I heard Mr. Otto Nugent telling Miss Latimer that she was anxious, and had gone back to her grandfather. How is he to-night, Geoff?"

"I left him asleep," Geoffrey answered.

He did not seem inclined to talk; but Lucy, who had been extremely amused by the ball, and quite satisfied with the attention paid to Frank and herself, went on telling him about the people who were there. She even broke out in admiration of some of the dresses, thereby making Frank laugh, while Geoffrey, who in truth was half asleep, listened heavily. He was not conscious of any particular pleasure, though she meant to please him, when she repeated that nobody there was prettier or better dressed than Maggie. His own impression was that Maggie was unhappy, though she had told him nothing. Whatever her resolutions might have been, he

felt pretty sure that she had danced with Arthur Nugent—more than once, probably.

Lucy, for her part, had not seen much, for the whole thing was too dazzling for her rather unaccustomed head. The fact of Captain Nugent's dancing with Maggie—how many times she did not realise—seemed hardly serious enough to need repeating to Geoffrey. It might bother the poor boy for nothing, she thought; and after all, Maggie had behaved well in going home early.

"Hang it all! Arthur had better marry her," said Otto Nugent the next day when his wife called him to a consultation with his mother in the library.

He knew that this must come. The night before he had had no talk with his mother, for when he came back from seeing Maggie off she and Arthur had both disappeared. He afterwards found that she had gone to her room, having, it seemed, sent Arthur back to his duty. For he was now, apparently in his right mind, to be seen dancing with Lady Jane Fitzhugh.

That morning he had come down late, looking white, tired, and ill, with a cough now and then which drew sharp glances from his mother. But she did not interfere to stop him when he went off with Poppy and some of the others to look at the ice in the river. Alice did not go with them. She had listened with consternation to Otto's story, and they both felt that a storm was in the air, so heavy, so near, that Poppy's unshadowed face seemed a wonderful sight as she devoted herself to her younger guests and planned amusement for them.

Miss Fanny Latimer did not appear at breakfast. She had a bad nervous headache. But Otto and Alice had hardly joined Mrs. Nugent in the library, in that same warm, fire-lit corner which had been the background of a scene not many hours before, when the door opened gently and her quick step was heard. Mrs. Nugent frowned. She did not want Fanny now.

"Your mother won't agree with you," Alice had said, shaking her head and smiling, when Otto made his last rash remark.

Certainly Mrs. Nugent did not agree with him. She had no intention of allowing the favourite plan of her life to be spoiled by a foolish, wilful boy and an unprincipled, low-bred girl. Like a good general, she had thought out her campaign

in the early hours of the morning. It only remained to secure the help of Otto and Alice, and the submission of Arthur.

It was tiresome enough that, before she could say a word, Fanny Latimer should bring her trifling little presence into the library. Mrs. Nugent's first question to Otto was checked on her lips. She looked up at Fanny with eyes which spoke of anything but welcome. Otto, standing by the fire, stroked his moustache and smiled to himself, growing grave again as his keen eyes studied Miss Latimer's face. Alice was carefully examining the Japanese screen she held in her hand; but she, too, looked up startled at the first sound of Miss Latimer's voice.

"Laura, I want to speak to you about something. I am terribly distressed, and I should not have believed what was told me but for the evidence of my own eyes last night. I have mentioned it to no one—not even to Mr. Cantillon—but I must mention it to you, because you are the only person, and of course I know that Otto and Alice are the same as you. I wonder if you saw anything last night, too?"

Her eyes wandered wistfully from one face to another. There was a moment of awkward silence.

"Do you mind saying plainly what you mean, Fanny?" said Mrs. Nugent, with the extreme, distinct gentleness which sometimes marked extreme annoyance and anxiety.

This was a complication she had not expected, though she could not claim any right to be surprised, for Arthur's idiotic rashness deserved anything. But, indeed, nothing could be more serious, more alarming, than Fanny Latimer's interference. Mrs. Nugent knew that her love for Poppy was thorough and loyal. Her friendship for herself was a real thing too, no doubt; but how would it be when the two were arrayed against each other? Mrs. Nugent could hardly take refuge in flat denial of anything Fanny might say, especially in the presence of Otto and Alice. For a moment she felt extremely angry with Fanny for having produced her complaints in public, instead of speaking to her alone. Otto and Alice were not the same as herself, and Fanny had no business to suppose that they were.

However, a moment's thought reminded Mrs. Nugent that if Arthur was still to be saved, she could do nothing more impolitic than to quarrel with Fanny. Her

influence over her friend had always been strong; it must now be used to the utmost. She shrewdly guessed that Fanny found some aid to her courage, which was never very great, in the fact of Otto's and Alice's presence. She would have found it much more difficult to say what she had to say to Laura Nugent alone. And it was another good sign that she had not taken Mr. Cantillon into her confidence. That wrong-headed, enthusiastic person, who had never really liked Poppy's engagement, might at this moment have done Arthur irreparable injury; and Fanny knew that well enough.

"What have you been told, and who told you?" said Mrs. Nugent with dignity; while Miss Latimer, flushed and nervous, sat down at the farthest end of the sofa.

"It was last night, Laura," she answered in a voice which trembled, though it gained firmness as she went on. "Arch came to me while I was dressing for dinner. She told me things that surprised me—more than I can say."

"Oh! servants' gossip!" said Mrs. Nugent sharply.

She could not keep the tone of contemptuous irritation out of her voice, though she felt her own imprudence. Otto gave her a warning look. He thought that a good deal depended on his mother's management now. Alice bit her lips, glanced at Miss Latimer, and then again studied her screen.

"I have great confidence in Arch. She is more than a mere servant, and she never gossips at all," said Fanny Latimer, lifting her head. "It was her duty to tell me what she did. I suppose we are none of us suspicious; but, really, even if she had said nothing, I think Arthur's behaviour last night would have seemed to me more than strange. Poppy, of course, saw nothing. She cannot think evil. With my own ears, poor dear, I heard her ask him to dance with that girl."

Miss Latimer's voice faltered.

"So did I," murmured Otto.

"Fanny," said Mrs. Nugent gravely, "be good enough to tell us what Arch told you."

"Yes; I must tell you. I came for that. It is very terrible for us all. I have never been more shocked."

So Fanny began her story, which her listeners found a little confused, though Otto saw no reason to doubt a single word of it. It went back to Arthur's first days

at Bryans—how the village people had noticed Captain Nugent in church, and that his eyes were always drawn to Miss Farrant. Then came stories of meetings, seen or only suspected, among which the keeper's story of meeting Captain Nugent at the gate of the wood held a prominent place. Next came the most recent and most striking story of all—that the day before yesterday, when Captain Nugent had walked up from the station through the snow, he had been seen by one of the grooms to stop at Church Corner, to be let in by Miss Farrant herself, while nearly an hour later a woman going to the Court had seen him come up from her garden and turn into the wood. Yesterday again he had been at Church Corner for a long time in the afternoon.

"Poppy knew of that—she sent him," said Alice hastily.

"Oh! Well, I am glad to hear it," said Miss Latimer with some coldness. "But the day before nobody knew. Poppy and I understood that the train was very late, and that he had come straight from the station. However, don't imagine that I think too much of these things. Arthur can, of course, spend his time as he pleases. Only it is most disagreeable, most horrible to me, that he should be talked about like this in Bryans, and also, I must say, that he should not have enough feeling for us all—not only for Poppy—to avoid the chance of such a thing. Of course, after last night, nobody with their eyes open can fail to see that, whether all they say is true or not, he cares for that girl and not for Poppy."

There was a dead silence. Miss Latimer had at this moment very much the best of it, for not one of Arthur's family could deny her statements, or find a word of excuse to say for him.

His mother was the first to speak.

"Arthur has been terribly foolish," she said, with a deep sigh. "I suppose, Fanny, you mean that the engagement must be broken off?"

Fanny Latimer stared. This, indeed, was going straight to the point, and she was hardly prepared for such an open admission of what was, of course, occupying her own mind. The affair must, indeed, be hopeless if such words were said by Arthur's mother. Fanny had expected fiery indignation, strong denial, absolute refusal to believe any of Mrs. Arch's stories. She was ready enough to cope

with these. This sort of resignation to the inevitable was a different matter.

"Poppy must be told, and the engagement must be broken off," Mrs. Nugent repeated in a louder tone. "Arthur is ruined. I should say he had only himself to blame, if it were not for—that girl. Well—the first thing is to get him away from this place. Otto, where is your brother?"

"Out somewhere," Otto murmured, without moving.

There was a kind of doubtful admiration in his eyes as they rested on his mother.

"It is so dreadful," sighed Fanny Latimer, leaning her head on her hand. "I can't realise it. Such an overturn of everything—and we were all so happy. It is no doing of mine, is it? Nobody can be more sorry. I suppose you had some idea, all of you. But not before last night?"

There was another pause; then Otto spoke, his mother's eyes fixed upon him in keen anxiety.

"I should be inclined to say a great deal in defence of Arthur, only that—when we were here before—I saw that he admired Miss Farrant rather more than was prudent. In fact I had some talk with him about it. He saw the force of what I said then, and I hoped he would have the sense to keep away from her in future. Apparently he is a bigger fool than I thought him; especially if this visit on the way from the station really took place. Perhaps last night—dancing with her so much"—Otto glanced at his mother—"was more natural, more excusable, I mean. It was all in public, anyhow."

"I cannot think, Otto," said Mrs. Nugent, "why you did not tell me before that there was something. It would have been better for me to know."

"I thought it over—and, as I tell you, I hoped that Arthur would come to his senses."

Alice lifted her head and looked at him, smiling.

"He talked it over with me, mamma," she said. "I thought like him that it was only a passing fancy, and that there would be terrible unhappiness if anything were said. I thought quite as much of Poppy as of him. I still think that with Poppy's goodness, and all the influence she has over him, nobody need be so very much afraid of the future."

It was boldly said, and they all thought

so. Alice's husband thought so especially, for he knew what Mrs. Nugent did not, that he had told her of that scene in the library. It was hardly to be expected that Arthur's little sister-in-law would be his bravest champion.

"Alice, you say you thought of Poppy," said Miss Fanny Latimer. "Now put yourself in Poppy's place. Would you like to marry a man who cared for you so little?"

"Yes, if I loved him, and Poppy does love Arthur. And, what is more, in spite of all this, let me tell you that I don't believe he cares for her so little. He admires her immensely. You all know that he was never so very much in love with her. It was an arranged business; and, really, I think you ought to remember how we pushed things on in Switzerland, so that he almost couldn't help proposing. Of course, dear Poppy was as innocent then as she is now. But you should consider all this before you are so immensely shocked and astonished at Arthur's flirting with a pretty girl."

Miss Fanny Latimer listened with her eyes wide open. Mrs. Nugent looked gloomily on the floor. She was grateful to Alice, and saw the full force of what she said so openly. But she knew, as none of the others did, the whole story of that Sunday afternoon when Arthur engaged himself to Poppy. "Almost couldn't help proposing" was a very mild way of describing the state of things. Now, it seemed, the result of all those schemes must be failure and punishment—unless Fanny, her old friend, who had shared in the schemes so far and so heartily, could be persuaded to give Arthur one more chance.

"Otto, what do you think?" said Fanny.

"I am inclined to agree with Alice," said Otto, but gravely, and with hesitation; for the sight of those two last night was before his eyes, and he could hear their voices speaking. If Miss Latimer had that advantage the end would be hardly doubtful, he felt.

"As for me," said Mrs. Nugent, with her eyes on Fanny, "I am in despair. I see no way out of it. It will break my heart, but that doesn't matter. Fanny, my son shall not bring possible trouble into your family. The engagement must be broken off, and the sooner the better."

Fanny made no answer at once. She sat with her head bent and her hands

clasped tightly together. Her mind was full of the question—how to break this awful change to Poppy, this crumbling ruin of the love in which she trusted? For the decision must come from her. Miss Latimer saw this more clearly than her friend did, perhaps. The Nugents must not be allowed to save their credit by letting the first step come from their side. If it must be—if this was really the end, as Arthur's mother so evidently thought—the end, which such arguments as Alice used could hardly alter or delay—why, then, Fanny bitterly regretted that she had not told everything to Mr. Cantillon before speaking to the others. He would have saved her, she thought, such a distressing scene as this; for he had almost as much right as herself to be consulted in Poppy's affairs. In the depth of her heart, too, Miss Latimer felt that the engagement ought to be broken off, and at once, at whatever cost of suffering. The mere fact of Arthur's being capable of such a flirtation made him an unworthy husband for Poppy. She had felt that last night as strongly as Mrs. Arch herself, and she felt it still, in spite of Alice and Otto; though at the same time she was terribly sorry, and almost ready herself to trust in the reformation of Arthur.

A little sound roused her. Otto and Alice were both staring blankly into the fire, probably wishing themselves out of this most awkward situation. Mrs. Nugent was crying.

In all their long friendship Fanny Latimer had never seen this sight before. Laura Nugent had been to her the incarnation of strength, courage, and calmness; a rock on which her own weaker nature had many times rested. That she should give way like any ordinary person, that real tears of grief and disappointment should be running down those fine firm cheeks, touched Fanny's heart to the quick.

"My dear Laura. My dear," she exclaimed, and hastily rising from her place, she moved close up to Mrs. Nugent and took her hand.

"Are Otto and Alice there?" said a fresh voice suddenly, and into the midst of this melancholy fireside group came Poppy in her warm coat and hat, smiling, and with a most becoming colour from the cold.

Arthur was close behind her; but as his eyes fell on his relations he retreated a step or two and muttered something

between his teeth. Were they all gone mad? Had they made up their minds to ruin him from a sense of duty? It must be so, or why should his mother, with such a deplorable face, be talking confidences to Miss Latimer? What a fool he had been to go off this morning without speaking to his mother. Surely she could not wish everything to come to smash, everything that she had arranged so carefully. Whatever Arthur might have said or thought the night before, he was hardly ready this morning to give up Bryans Court and all his future. It was heart-breaking, of course, for him and for Maggie, and it would be worse now that his people knew. But after all——

His hasty reflections were interrupted by the talk which was going on behind the screen, and he stood like a statue listening to it.

"You are not well. What is the matter?" said Poppy. "What is it, Aunt Fanny?"

Before Miss Latimer had time to answer, Mrs. Nugent was speaking.

"Quite well, dear Poppy, thank you. I am worried and unhappy. I did not mean to tell you so soon, but perhaps it is better. It is about Arthur."

Poppy turned half round. She thought Arthur was there, but did not see him.

"I was talking things over with your aunt," Mrs. Nugent went on. "He is so far from well. You must have noticed what a cough he has, and how flushed he is sometimes, and how this terrible winter tries him. Don't interrupt me, dear; let me tell you. Otto and Alice see it as I do. The doctors did say, you know, that he ought not to spend this winter in England. Now, what I should like to do is to take him straight away at once to the Riviera, and keep him there all through the horrid spring and the east winds, and bring him back quite another creature in time for—for May. That is my wish. Now you know what is worrying me. Neither of you will like the long parting; and yet——"

"He shall go, as far as I am concerned. Don't think I shall oppose it, dear Mrs.

Nugent," said Poppy after a pause. In another moment she added: "I will tell him I wish it. But will you come now, Alice—and Otto? The others are waiting. We are going to see how far we can skate down the river."

She was very pale and quite calm. Mrs. Nugent thought her a strange girl as she bent over and kissed her before leaving the room. Otto and Alice followed her, hardly even venturing to look their astonishment. Arthur had prudently slipped out before them and was found in the hall.

Then the tears rose again in Mrs. Nugent's eyes, and rolled down her cheeks.

"Now, Fanny," she said, "will you forgive me, my dear, and will you let that be true? I will speak to him so that you shall have nothing more to complain of. I promise you that. He shall alter entirely, or he shall never come back at all."

So once more the strongest and most ingenious mind had its way. Arthur Nugent's mother scored a second victory.

In three days she had left Bryans, taking her captive son with her. In another week she had carried him off to the South. Her friend, Fanny Latimer, was left with a bad conscience, with an anxiety about the future which gave her sleepless nights, and made her various irritable fancies something of a sad surprise to the faithful and affectionate Rector. And Porphyria was aware of a more vague uneasiness, rising from the shadow which hung over Arthur at his leaving, and which suggested that he was uneasy about himself.

At Church Corner he was never mentioned. Somehow, on the evening of his departure, a little note found its way to Maggie, asking her to forgive him and to forget. She crushed it in her hand and threw it into the fire. Then Geoffrey, coming into the room on one of his frequent evening visits, found her crying in almost darkness. He half suspected the reason; but tried patiently to comfort her. He was too conscious of his own straying thoughts to be very hard on Maggie, and life felt like an easier business now that Arthur Nugent was gone.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. ROMAYNE carried the despatch-box to her bedroom and set it down on a small table. She and Falconer were leaving Nice on the following morning, and her maid was just finishing her packing. Mrs. Romayne inspected the woman's arrangements, gave her one or two orders, and then dismissed her. Left alone, she made one or two trifling preparations for the journey on her own account, and when these were completed to her satisfaction, she drew the table on which she had placed the despatch-box to the open window, and seated herself.

She drew the box towards her and unlocked it, and there was nothing in her face as she did so but the hard resentment which had grown upon it during the last few days, just touched by an indefinite and equally hard curiosity. The interest which those papers possessed for her had been created by purely artificial means; intrinsically they were nothing to her. The position which the possession of them had occupied in her thoughts lately was the sole source of the impulse under which she was acting now; under any other circumstances she might hardly have cared to look at them.

She raised the lid and paused a moment, looking down at the compact mass of papers within with a sudden vague touch of more personal interest. The box was nearly full. The various sets of papers were carefully and methodically fastened

together, and endorsed evidently upon a system. Mrs. Romayne hesitated a moment, and then took out a packet at random.

It consisted of bills all bearing dates within the last six months; all sent in by leading London tradesmen, and all for large amounts. Mrs. Romayne glanced at the figures, and her eyebrows moved with an expression of alight surprise, which was almost immediately dominated by bitter acceptance and comprehension. She opened none, however, until she came to one bearing the name of a well-known London jeweller. She read the name and the amount of the bill, and paused; then a new curiosity came into her eyes, and she unfolded the paper quickly. The account was a very long one, and as her eyes travelled quickly down it, taking in item after item, a dull red colour crept into her face, and her eyes sparkled with contemptuous resentment. She was evidently surprised, and yet half-annoyed with herself for being surprised. Two-thirds of the items in the bill in her hand were for articles of jewellery not worn by men, and not one of these had ever been seen by William Romayne's wife.

She stuffed the paper back into its fastening, tossed the bundle away and took another packet from the box with quickened interest. It consisted of miscellaneous documents, all, likewise, connected with her husband's life in London during the past winter, but of no particular interest. The next packet she opened was of the same nature, and with that the top layer of the box came to an end.

The papers below were evidently older; of varying ages, indeed, to judge from their varying tints of yellow. Disarranging a

lower layer in taking out the packet nearest to her hand, Mrs. Romaine saw that there were older papers still, beneath, and realised that the box before her contained the private papers of many years; probably all the private papers which William Romaine had preserved throughout his life. She opened the packet she had drawn out, hastily and with an angry glitter in her eyes. It consisted of businesslike-looking documents, not likely, as it seemed, to be of any interest to her.

She glanced through the first unheeding enough, and then, as she reached the end, something seemed suddenly to touch her attention. She paused a moment, with a startled, incredulous expression on her face, and began to re-read it slowly and carefully. She read it to the end again, and her face, as she finished, was a little pale and chilled-looking. She freed another paper from the packet almost mechanically, with an absorbed, preoccupied look in her eyes, opened it and read it with a strained, hardly comprehending attention which grew gradually and imperceptibly, as she went on from paper to paper, into a kind of stupefied horror. She finished the thick packet in her hands, and then she paused, lifting her pale face for a moment and gazing straight before her with an indescribable expression on its shallow hardness, as though she was realising something almost incredibly bitter and repugnant to her, and was stunned by the realisation. Then her instincts and habits of life and thought seemed to assert themselves, as it were, and to dominate the situation. Her expression changed; the stupefied look gave place to what was little deeper than bitter excitement; a patch of angry colour succeeded the pallor of a moment earlier; and her eyes glittered.

Turning to the despatch-box again, she proceeded to ransack it with a hasty eagerness of touch which differed markedly from the careless composure of her earlier proceedings. Paper after paper was torn open, glanced through—sometimes even re-read with a feverish attention—and tossed aside; sometimes with a sudden deepening of that angry flush; sometimes with a movement of the lips, as though an interjection formed itself upon them; always with a heightening of her excitement; until one packet only remained at the bottom of the box. Mrs. Romaine snatched it out, and then started slightly as she saw that it did not consist, as the

majority of the others had done, of business papers, but of letters in a woman's handwriting. Nor was it so old as many of the papers she had looked at, some of which had borne dates twenty-five years back. She opened it with a sudden hardening of her excitement, which seemed to mark the change from almost impersonal to intensely personal interest. She saw that the date was that of the second year after her marriage; that each letter was annotated in her husband's writing; and then she began deliberately to read, her lips very thin and set, her eyes cold and hard. She read the letters all through, with every comment inscribed on them, and by the time she laid the last upon the table her very lips were white with vindictive feeling strangely incongruous on her little conventional face. She sat quite still for a moment, and then rose abruptly and stood by the window with her back to the table, looking out upon the evening sky.

The strength of feeling died out of her face, however, in the course of a very few minutes, leaving it only very white and rather strange-looking, as though she had received a series of shocks which had made a mark even on material so difficult to impress as her artificial personality; and she turned, by-and-by, and contemplated the table, littered now with documents of all sorts, as though she saw, not the actual heaps of papers, but something beyond them contemptible and disgusting to her beyond expression. Then suddenly she moved forward, crammed the papers indiscriminately into the despatch-box, forced down the lid, and carried the box out of the room down the stairs towards the sitting-room where she had left Dennis Falconer.

It was an impulse not wholly consistent with the self-reliance of her ordinary manner; but that manner had been acquired in a world where shocks and difficulties were more or less disbelieved in. Face to face with so unconventional a condition of affairs Mrs. Romaine's conventional instincts were necessarily at fault; and there being no strong motive power in her to supply their place, it was only natural that she should relieve herself by turning to the man on whom the past few days had taught her to rely.

Dennis Falconer was not in the sitting-room when she opened the door, but as she stood in the doorway contemplating the empty room, he came down the corridor behind her.

"Were you looking for me?" he said with distant courtesy as he reached her. He made a movement to relieve her of the box she carried, and as he did so he was struck by her expression. "Is there anything here you wish me to see?" he said quickly and gravely.

"Yes," she said; she spoke in a dry, hard voice, about which there was a ring of excitement which made him look at her again, and realise vaguely that something was wrong.

He followed her into the room, and she motioned to him to put the box on the table.

"I have been looking them over," she said, indicating the papers with a gesture, "and I have brought them to you. They are very interesting."

She laughed a bitter, crackling little laugh, and the disapproval in ambush in Dennis Falconer's expression developed a little.

"Do you wish me to go over them now, and with you?" he enquired stiffly.

"Not with me, I think, thank you," she answered, the novel excitement about her manner finding expression once more in that harsh little laugh. "One reading is enough. But now, if you don't mind. There are business points on which I may possibly be mistaken"—she did not look as though she spoke from conviction—"and—I should like you to read them. I will go out into the garden; it is quite empty always at this time, and I want some air."

Her tone and the glance she cast at the despatch-box as she spoke made it evident that it was not closeness of material atmosphere alone that had created the necessity.

"I will read them now, certainly, if you wish it," he returned.

Then, as she took up a book which lay on a table with a mechanical gesture of acknowledgement, he opened the door for her and she went out of the room. He came back to the table, drew up a chair, and opened the despatch-box.

Two hours later Dennis Falconer was still sitting in that same chair, his right hand, which rested on the table, clenched until the knuckles were white, his face pale to the very lips beneath its tan. In his eyes, fixed in a kind of dreadful fascination on the innocent-looking piles of papers before him, there was a look of shocked, almost incredulous horror, which seemed to touch all that was narrow and dogmatic about his ordinary expression

into something deep and almost solemn. The door opened, and he started painfully. It was only the waiter with preliminary preparations for dinner, and recovering himself with an effort Falconer rose, and slowly, almost as though their very touch was repugnant to him, began to replace the papers in the box. He locked it, and then left the room, carrying it with him.

Dinner was served, and Mrs. Romaine had been waiting some two or three minutes before he reappeared. He was still pale, and the horror had rather settled down on to his face than left it; but it had changed its character somewhat; the breadth was gone from it. It was as though he had passed through a moment of expansion and insight to contract again to his ordinary limits. Mrs. Romaine was standing near the window; the excitement had almost entirely subsided from her manner, leaving her only harder and more bitter in expression than she had been three hours before. She glanced sharply at Falconer as he came towards her with a constrained conventional word or two of apology; answered him with the words his speech demanded, and they sat down to dinner.

It was a silent meal. Mrs. Romaine made two or three remarks on general topics, and asked one or two questions as to their journey of the following day; and Falconer responded as briefly as courtesy allowed. On his own account he originated no observation whatever until dinner was over, and the final disappearance of the waiter had been succeeded by a total silence.

Mrs. Romaine was still sitting opposite him, one elbow resting on the table, her head leaning on her hand as she absently played with some grapes on which her eyes were fixed. Falconer glanced across at her once or twice, evidently with a growing conviction that it was incumbent on him to speak, and with a growing uncertainty as to what he should say. This latter condition of things helped to make his tone even unusually formal and dogmatic as he said at last:

"Sympathy, I fear, must seem almost a farce!"

She glanced up quickly, her eyes very bright and hard.

"Sympathy?" she said drily. "I don't know that there is any new call for sympathy, is there? After all, things are very much where they were!"

A kind of shock passed across Falconer's face; a materialisation of a mental process.

"What we know now——" he began stiffly.

"What we knew before was quite enough!" interrupted Mrs. Romaine. "When one has arrived violently at the foot of the precipice, it is of no particular moment how long one has been living on the precipice's edge. While nothing was known, Mr. Romaine was only on the precipice's edge, and as no one knew of the precipice it was practically as though none existed. Directly one thing came out it was all over! He was over the edge. Nothing could make it either better or worse."

She spoke almost carelessly, though very bitterly, as though she felt her words to be almost truisms, and Falconer stared at her for a moment in silence. Then he said with stern formality, as though he were making a deliberate effort to realise her point of view:

"You imply that Mr. Romaine's fall—his going over the edge of the precipice, if I may adopt your figure—consisted in the discovery of his misdeeds. Do you mean that you think it would have been better if nothing had ever been known?"

Mrs. Romaine raised her eyebrows.

"Of course!" she said amazedly. Then catching sight of her cousin's face she shrugged her shoulders with a little gesture of deprecating concession. "Oh, of course, I don't mean that Mr. Romaine himself would have been any better if nothing had ever come out," she said impatiently. "The right and wrong and all that kind of thing would have been the same, I suppose. But I don't see how ruin and suicide improve the position."

She rose as she spoke, and Falconer made no answer.

Mrs. Romaine had touched on the great realities of life, the everlasting mystery of the spirit of man with its unfathomable obligations and disabilities; had touched on them carelessly, patronisingly, as "all that kind of thing." She was as absolutely blind to the depth of their significance as is a man without eyesight to the illimitable spaces of the sky above him. To Falconer her tone was simply scandalising. He did not understand her ignorance. He could not touch the pathos of its limitations and the possibilities by which it was surrounded. The grim irony of such a tone as used by the

ephemeral of the immutable was beyond his ken.

"I have several things to see to upstairs," Mrs. Romaine went on after a moment's pause. "I shall go up now, and I think, if you will excuse me, I will not come down again. We start so early. Good night!"

"Good night!" he returned stiffly; and with a little superior, contemptuous smile on her face she went away.

CHAPTER V.

DENNIS FALCONER had been alone for nearly an hour, when his solitude was broken up by the appearance of a waiter, who presented him with a card, and the information that the gentleman whose name it bore was in the smoking-room. The name was Dr. Aston's, and after a moment's reflection Falconer told the waiter to ask the gentleman to come upstairs. Falconer had spent that last hour in meditation, which had grown steadily deeper and graver. It seemed to have carried him beyond the formal and dogmatic attitude of mind with which he had met Mrs. Romaine, back to the borders of those larger regions he had touched when he sat looking at William Romaine's papers; and there was a warmth and gratitude in his reception of Dr. Aston when that gentleman appeared, that suggested that he was not so completely sufficient for himself as usual.

"The smoking-room is very full, I imagine!" he said, as he welcomed the little doctor. "My cousin has gone to bed, and I thought if you didn't mind coming up, doctor, we should be better off here."

Dr. Aston's answer was characteristically hearty and alert. Knowing it to be Falconer's last night at Nice, he had come round, he said, just for a farewell word, and to arrange, if possible, for a meeting later on under happier circumstances. A quiet chat over a cigar was what he had not hoped for, but the thing of all others he would like. He settled himself with a genial instinct for comfort in the arm-chair Falconer pulled round to the window for him; accepted a cigar and prepared to light it; glancing now and again at the younger man's face with shrewd, kindly eyes, which had already noticed something unusual in its expression.

Dr. Aston and Dennis Falconer had met some six years before in Africa under circumstances which had brought out all that

was best in the young man's character; and Dr. Aston had been warmly attracted by him. Being a particularly shrewd student of human nature, he had taken his measure accurately enough subsequently, and knew as certainly as one man may of another where his weak points lay, and how time was dealing with them. But his kindness for, and interest in, Dennis Falconer had never abated; perhaps because his insight did not, as so much human insight does, stop at the weak points.

Dennis Falconer, for his part, regarded Dr. Aston with an affectionate respect which he gave to hardly any other man on earth.

There was a short silence as the two men lit their cigars, and then Dr. Aston, with another glance at Falconer's face, broke it with a kindly, delicate enquiry after Mrs. Romaine. Falconer answered it almost absently, but with an instinctive stiffening, so to speak, of his face and voice, and there was another pause. The doctor was trying the experiment of waiting for a lead. He was just deciding that he must make another attempt on his own account when Falconer took his cigar from between his lips and said, with his eyes fixed on the evening sky:

"I'm always glad to see you, doctor; but I never was more glad than to-night."

A sound proceeded from the doctor which might have been described as a grunt if it had been less delicately sympathetic, and Falconer continued:

"I've been trying to think out a problem, and it was one too many for me: the origin of evil."

He was thoroughly in earnest, and nothing was further from him than any thought of lightness or flippancy. But there was a calm familiarity and matter-of-course acquaintanceship with his subject about his tone that produced a slight quiver about the corners of the little doctor's mouth. He did not speak, however, and the movement with which he took his cigar from between his lips and turned to Falconer was merely sympathetic and interested.

"Of course, I know it's an unprofitable subject enough," continued Falconer almost apologetically. "We shall never be much the wiser on the subject, struggle as we may. But still, now and then it seems to be forced on one. It has been forced on me to-day."

"Apropos of William Romaine?" sug-

gested Dr. Aston, so delicately that the words seemed rather a sympathetic comment than a question.

"Yes," returned Falconer. "We have been looking through his private papers." He paused a moment, and then continued as if drawn on almost in spite of himself. "You knew him by repute, I dare say, doctor. He had one of those strong personalities which get conveyed even by hearsay. A clever man, striking and dominating, universally liked and deferred to. Yet he must have been as absolutely without principle as this table is without feeling."

He struck the little table between them with his open hand as he spoke; and then, as though the expression of his feelings had begotten, as is often the case, an irresistible desire to relieve himself further, he answered Dr. Aston's interested ejaculation as if it had been the question the doctor was at once too well-bred and too full of tact to put.

"There were no papers connected with this last disgraceful affair—those, as you know, I dare say, were all seized in London. It's the man's past life that these private papers throw light on. Light, did I say? It was a life of systematic, cold-blooded villainy, for which no colours could be dark enough."

He had uttered his last sentence involuntarily, as it seemed, and now he laid down his cigar, and turning to Dr. Aston, began to speak low and quickly.

"They are papers of all kinds," he said. "Letters, business documents, memoranda of every description, and two-thirds of them at least have reference to fraud and wrong of one kind or another. Not one penny that man possessed can have been honestly come by. His business was swindling; every one of his business transactions was founded on fraud. He can have had no faith or honesty of any sort or kind. He was living with another woman before he had been married a year. All that woman's letters—he deceived her abominably, and it's fortunate that she died—are annotated and endorsed like his 'business' memoranda; evidently kept deliberately as so much stored experience for future use!"

Dr. Aston had listened with a keen, alert expression of intent interest. His cigar was forgotten, and he laid it down now as if impatient of any distraction, and leant forward over the table with his shrewd, kindly little eyes fixed eagerly on Falconer. Human nature was a hobby of his.

Falconer's confidence, or more truly perhaps the manner of it, had swept away all conventional barriers, and the elder man asked two or three quick, penetrating questions.

"How far back do these records go?" he asked finally.

"They cover five-and-twenty years, I should say," returned Falconer. "The first note on a successful fraud must have been made when he was about four-and-twenty. Why, even then—when he was a mere boy—he must have been entirely without moral sense!"

"Yes!" said the doctor, with a certain dry briskness of manner which was apt to come to him in moments of excitement. "That is exactly what he was, my boy! It was that, in conjunction with his powerful brain, that made him what you called just now dominating. It gave him vantage-ground over his fellow-men. He was as literally without moral sense as a colour-blind man is without a sense of colour, or a homicidal maniac without a sense of the sanctity of human life."

An expression of rather horrified and entirely uncomprehending protest spread itself over Falconer's face.

"Romaine was not mad," he objected, with that incapacity for penetrating beneath the surface which was characteristic of him. "I never even heard that there was madness in the family."

"You would find it if you looked far enough, without a doubt!" answered the doctor decidedly. "This is a most interesting subject, Dennis, and it's one that it's very difficult to look into without upsetting the whole theory of moral responsibility, and doing more harm than enough. I don't say Romaine was mad, as the word is usually understood, but all you tell me confirms a notion I have had about him ever since this affair came out. He was what we call morally insane. I'll tell you what first put the idea into my head. It was the extraordinary obtuseness, the extraordinary want of perception, of that blunder of his that burst up the whole thing. Look at it for yourself. It was a flaw in his comprehension of moral sense only possible in a man who knew of the quality by hearsay alone. He must have been a very remarkable man. I wish I had known him!"

"I have heard the term 'moral insanity,' of course," said Falconer slowly and distastefully, ignoring the doctor's last, purely

æsthetic sentence, "but it has always seemed to me, doctor, if you'll pardon my saying so, a very dangerous tampering with things that should be sacred even from science. I cannot believe that any man is actually incapable of knowing right from wrong."

"The difficulty is," said the doctor drily, "that the words right and wrong sometimes convey nothing to him, as the words red and blue convey nothing to a colour-blind man, and the endearments of his wife convey nothing to the lunatic who is convinced that she is trying to poison him." He paused a moment, and then said abruptly: "Are there any children?"

Falconer glanced at him and changed colour slightly.

"Yes," he said slowly. "One boy!"

The keen, shrewd face of the elder man softened suddenly and indescribably under one of those quick sympathetic impulses which were Dr. Aston's great charm.

"Heaven help his mother!" he said gently.

Falconer moved quickly and protestingly, and there was a touch of something like rebuke in his voice as he said:

"Doctor, you don't mean to say that you think——"

"You believe in heredity, I suppose?" interrupted the doctor quickly. "Well, at least, you believe in the heredity you can't deny—that a child may—or rather must—inherit, not only physical traits and infirmities, but mental tendencies; likes, dislikes, aptitudes, incapacities, or what not. Be consistent, man, and acknowledge the sequel, though it's pleasanter to shut one's eyes to it, I admit. Put the theory of moral insanity out of the question for the moment if you like; say that Romaine was a pronounced specimen of the common criminal. Why should not his child inherit his father's tendency to crime, his father's aptitude for lying and thieving, as he might inherit his father's eyes or his father's liking for music—if he had a turn that way? You're a religious man, Falconer, I know. You believe, I take it, that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children. How can they be visited more heavily than in their reproduction? You mark my words, my boy, that little child of Romaine's—unless he inherits strong counter influences from his mother, or some far-away ancestor—will go the way his father has gone, and may end as his father has ended!"

There was a slight sound by the door behind the two men as Dr. Aston finished—finished with a force and solemnity that carried a painful thrill of conviction even through the not very penetrable outer crust of dogma which enwrapped Dennis Falconer—and the latter turned his head involuntarily. The next instant both men had sprung to their feet, and were standing dumb and aghast face to face with Mrs. Romayne. She was standing with her hand still on the lock of the door as if her attention had been arrested just as she was entering the room; she had apparently recoiled, for she was pressed now tightly against the door; her face was white to the very lips, and a vague thought passed through Falconer that he had never seen it before; it was as though the look in her eyes, as she gazed at Dr. Aston, had changed it beyond recognition.

There was a moment's dead silence; a moment during which Dr. Aston turned from red to white and from white to red again, and struggled vainly to find words; a moment during which Falconer could only stare blankly at that unfamiliar woman's face. Then, while the two men were still utterly at a loss, Mrs. Romayne seemed gradually to command herself, as if with a tremendous effort. Gradually, as he looked at her, Falconer saw the face with which he was familiar shape itself, so to speak, upon that other face he did not know. He saw her eyes change and harden as if with the effort necessitated by her conventional instinct against a scene. He saw the quivering horror of her mouth alter and subside in the hard little society smile he knew well, only a little stiffer than usual as her face was whiter; and then he heard her speak.

With a little movement of her head in civil recognition of Dr. Aston's presence, she said to Falconer:

"My book is on that table. Will you give it to me, please?"

Her voice was quite steady, though a little thin. Almost mechanically Falconer handed her the book she asked for, and with another slight inclination of her head, before Dr. Aston had recovered his balance sufficiently to speak, she was gone.

The door closed behind her, and a low ejaculation broke from the doctor. Then he drew a long breath, and said slowly:

"That's a remarkable woman."

Falconer drew his hand across his forehead as though he were a little dazed.

"I think not!" he said stupidly. "Not when you know her!"

"Ah!" returned the doctor, with a shrewd glance at him. "And you do know her?"

If Falconer could have seen Mrs. Romayne an hour later, he would have been more than ever convinced of the correctness of his judgement. The preparations for departure were nearly concluded; she had dismissed her maid and was finishing them herself with her usual quiet deliberation, though her face was very pale and set.

But it might have perplexed him somewhat if he had seen her, when everything was done, stop short in the middle of the room and lift her hands to her head as though something oppressed her almost more heavily than she could bear.

"End as his father ended!" she said below her breath. "Ruin and disgrace!"

She turned and crossed the room to where her travelling-bag stood, and drew from it a letter, thrust into a pocket with several others.

It was the blotted little letter which began "My dear Mamma," and when she returned it to the bag at last, her face was once again the face that Dennis Falconer did not know.

THE ENEMIES OF TOBACCO.

IN a recent number of "The Idler," Mr. G. R. Sims's eulogium on tobacco is faced by Dr. Parker's characteristically exaggerated denunciation, and Dr. Richardson's more measured condemnation of the soothing herb. The enemies of tobacco, like the poor, are always with us. From its very introduction the weed has been the object of continuous, and often embittered attack. Yet the world still smokes, smokes more steadily and more generally than at any previous period in the history of the practice. The lovers of tobacco may nowadays smoke their pipes in peace, in all parts of the world; but it was once far otherwise. "My Lady Nicotine" has had many martyrs.

The Turks are now a nation of smokers, but early in the seventeenth century, the priests and rulers denounced smoking as criminal, and Amurath the Fourth ordered its punishment by death in the cruellest forms. One playful punishment consisted in thrusting the pipes of smokers through their noses.

In Russia, at the same period, the noses of smokers were cut off. The powers ecclesiastical were strongly opposed to the new habit, and Popes Urban the Eighth and Innocent the Tenth thundered in turn against the terrible vice of smoking. The papal thunders, however, proved powerless against the charms of St. Nicotine; although there was much reason in those decrees which were directed against the custom of smoking and snuffing in church. Pope Urban excommunicated all who should be guilty of so unbecoming a practice; and later, Innocent the Tenth solemnly excommunicated all those who should take snuff or tobacco in St. Peter's Church, at Rome.

In England, tobacco quickly established itself, and in the first enthusiasm for the new habit of "drinking tobacco," as they styled it, our ancestors often went to considerable excess. One reverend gentleman, a Buckinghamshire vicar—described in that astrological age as a profound divine, but absolutely the most polite person of the period for nativities—was so bent upon smoking, that when his supply of tobacco ran short, he would cut up the bell-ropes and smoke the shredded fibre. If tobacco was enthusiastically welcomed, it was as warmly denounced. Very early in its English history an enemy elegantly wrote:

Let it be damn'd to Hell, and call'd from thence,
Proserpine's wine, the Furies' frankincense,
The devil's addle eggs.

Joshua Sylvester, the translator of Du Bartas, in 1615 published a work whose title is sufficiently violent—"Tobacco Battered, and the Pipes Shattered about their Eares, that Idely Idolize so base and barbarous a Weed, or at least over-love so loathsome a Vanity, by a Volley of Holy Shot Thundered from Mount Helicon."

One of its earliest opponents was Ben Jonson. The dramatist was fond of tavern life, and was devoted to the "lyric feasts" described by Herrick—

Where we such clusters had,
As made us nobly wild, not mad,

but for smoking he had no liking. In his earlier plays he frequently introduces a lover of tobacco, but always makes him figure somewhat contemptibly as a knave or fool. In "The Alchemist" there is a tobaccoconist, Abel Druggier—one of Garrick's best parts—whose character as an easily duped fool is painted with an unsparing

hand. The tricks of tobaccoconists of that early era are also hinted-at. We hear of dealers in the herb who sophisticated it with sack-lees, or oil, and washed it in muscadell and grains, a process which does not sound very inviting.

Another enemy of tobacco was worthy John Stow, who styles it "That stinking weed so much abused to God's dishonour." Nashe calls the devil a "great tobacco-taker," but, on the other hand, he speaks genially of the "divine druggie," and from various other allusions would seem to have been a follower of the new fashion. Dekker writes somewhat scornfully of smoking. He alludes to the nose which some "most injuriously and improperly" make serve for an Indian chimney; yet elsewhere he speaks of tobacco as "that costlie and gentleman-like smoak," and tells a tale of a jester who refused a pipe because it had the three bad properties of making any man a thief (which meant danger), a good fellow (which required cost), and a niggard (the name of which is hateful). This he explained as follows: it makes a man a thief, for he will steal it from his father; a good fellow, for he will give the smoke to a beggar; and a niggard, for he will not part with his box to an emperor.

A more determined and unequivocal opponent of tobacco soon appeared in the field in the person of King James the First. In his famous "Counter-blast," he denounced the Indian weed, "lock, stock, and barrel." There was nothing good to be said for it. Its effects were bad, physically and morally. Moreover, and here his argument became decidedly weak, it was wicked and disgraceful for Christians to borrow anything from barbarous heathens. In conclusion, smoking was denounced as "a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs; and, in the black stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless." And yet, notwithstanding this tremendous diatribe, His Majesty somewhat inconsistently permitted the planters in the American colonies to send their tobacco to England, while he cannily forbade the importation of the pernicious drug from the dominions of Spain. It must be added, however, that he tried hard to induce the Virginian colonists to abandon the cultivation of tobacco, and to take up that of silk, which he recommended as a rich and solid commodity preferable to the noxious weed. Charles the First made

a similar attempt. He bade the colonists send home "some better fruit than tobacco and smoke," and so avoid "the speedy ruin likely to befall the colonies, and the dangers to the bodies and manners of the English people, through the excessive growth of tobacco."

Many enemies of tobacco imitated King James in the vehemence of their denunciations of the weed, and, may it be added, in the weakness of their arguments. One John Deacon published in 1616 a quarto volume, now rare, to which he gave the attractive title: "Tobacco tortured; or the filthy fume of tobacco refined, shewing all sorts of subjects that the inward taking of tobacco fumes is very pernicious unto their bodies, too too profluvius for many of their purses, and most pestiferous to the publike State." The book is in the form of a dialogue; and after nearly two hundred pages of argument, in which the unfortunate herb gets no mercy, one of the interlocutors, a trader in tobacco, is so convinced of the iniquity of his trade, and of his own parlous state, that he declares that the two hundred pounds' worth of this "beastly tobacco" which he owns, shall "presently packe to the fire," or else be sent "swimming downe the Thames."

A few years later, in 1621, it was solemnly attacked in the House of Commons, and a Member moved that he "would have tobacco banished wholly out of the kingdom, and that it may not be brought in from any part, nor used amongst us." Another Member said that if tobacco were not banished, it would overthrow a hundred thousand men in England, for it was now so common that he had seen ploughmen take it as they were at plough. But both the House of Commons and the country refused to be frightened by the ploughman's pipe, or by terrible predictions of national ruin, and the use of tobacco continued to spread.

The Merry Monarch had a fling at it when he sent a letter to the University of Cambridge, forbidding the members to wear periwigs, to smoke tobacco, or to read their sermons! But the Royal mandate had little effect. The friends of tobacco even began to turn the tables, and to act on the offensive. It was said that in the Great Plague of London, none of those who kept tobaccoconists' shops suffered from it, and so smoking came to be regarded as an excellent preservative from contagion in such pestilences. Curiously enough, it is said to be a fact

that during the cholera epidemics of 1831, 1849, and 1866, not one London tobaccoconist died from that disease. When the plague was abroad even children were compelled to smoke; and at the time of the dreadful visitation of 1665, all the boys at Eton were obliged to smoke in the school every morning. One of these juvenile smokers declared years afterwards, to Hearne, the antiquary, that he never was whipped so much in his life as he was one morning for not smoking. Times have changed at Eton since this anti-tobaccoconist martyr received his whipping.

The enemies of tobacco have not yet died out. An Anti-Tobacco Association still continues to exist, we believe, but its outlook cannot be very cheerful. Smokers are still liable to be told that Balzac wrote: "*Le tabac détruit le corps, attaque l'intelligence, et hébète une nation*;" and the opinions of certain doctors are often quoted with great unction; but lovers of tobacco console themselves with the trite reflection that doctors disagree, and with the thought that if tobacco is a poison, it must be, as Fontenelle said of coffee, a very slow poison. Most of us will continue to applaud Lord Lytton's summing-up: "A pipe! It is a great soother, a pleasant comforter. Blue devils fly before its honest breath. It ripens the brain, it opens the heart; and the man who smokes, thinks like a sage, and acts like a Samaritan."

A NIGHT WITH THE ROOFERS IN NEW YORK.

"COME, my Telemachus," said my big cousin Tom a few evenings since, "if you are stifling in this wide and breezy hall, I will show thee how many of thy brethren in this city live; yea, I will lead thee to realms that are hotter than this."

And he did, indeed.

We went to see the "Roofers"—poor people who sleep on the roofs or any place where they can get a breath of fresh air. Whenever Tom takes me on what he calls a "prowling expedition," I put an extra pin in my hat and leave at home anything which might tempt dishonest fingers; while Tom invites "Nevermore," a stout walking-stick he possesses, to go too, and then he, "Nevermore"—so called because his head looks like that "Nevermore" raven, you know—and I, are prepared to

follow our reverend Mentor through divers and tortuous paths. First, as it was rather early to see the Roofers in their most picturesque aspect, we walked down Mulberry Street—the Italian quarter—to “Five Points,” the New York “Seven Dials.” Mulberry Street is not very wide, and when most of its inhabitants are out gossiping with their neighbours the progress of a pedestrian is necessarily rather slow. All the way the curb was lined with stalls, most of them made of a board resting on a couple of boxes. On this board were displayed weary-looking lettuces and a little scraggy plant with tiny yellow flowers—I can’t think what it is unless it be mustard—stale bread, “Hoky poky” ice cream, and large yellow beans. The bread was generally in big calico bags which lay on the pavement. Then, too, there were oranges and lemons, all of them wet-looking, as if they had been “fished up” from almost anywhere, and washed to look presentable. Scores of the shopkeepers were women who sat on the pavement or a doorstep, and held their shops in their laps. For instance, a woman would have a tin pan, perhaps half full of oranges and lemons, between her knees, with several loaves of bread tucked about it to keep it steady, a little pot of beans by her side, a bunch of that mysterious yellow plant in one hand, and she would still be able to serve her customers with the free hand, or to hold on to a baby with it. I never saw so many children to the square inch in my life. Positively there were swarms of them; half naked, tangle-haired, dirty-faced urchins. I, in my simplicity, wondered why they were not in their homes, if the mothers were always quite sure they had the right ones when they did call them in, they were so nearly a size and there was such a general resemblance. I am certain one woman had more than her share, for I counted seven she was keeping guard over, and if they were not all twins they looked very near it. The women never wear any head-covering, save their own hair, which is often very beautiful, or a kerchief, and as I wore a hat I was an object of much attention. Indeed I felt quite philanthropic, much as Madame Patti must when she sings at a charity concert for charity—so much amusement for the audience, no salary to the performer. The inhabitants of Mulberry Street all retire and rise early. But the old adage about “Healthy, wealthy, and wise” does not seem to apply here! Perhaps, when

we remember that, in the comparatively small area embraced by Broadway and the Bowery, Canal and Chatham Streets, there are near four thousand four hundred “apartments”—all so crowded that the health officers have been obliged to cut the standard of breathing room for an adult from six hundred to four hundred cubic feet—it will be seen that something beside “early to bed and early to rise,” is needed to bring about the happy state of affairs the proverb promises. Down about Cherry Street, once patrician “Cherry Hill,” we did not see much of the Roofers, for the reason that many of the houses now used as tenements were once old family mansions, and are built with dormer roofs. Here the children of the Emerald Isle hold forth, or rather hang forth, on anything which is reached by a breath of fresh air. Then we went to the Jewish quarter. One roof was all I wanted. If I told the number of flights of stairs I think we climbed, I fear I should be accused of “imagination.” Let it suffice to say that we climbed—and climbed—and climbed. Many of the women were still engaged in their household duties, and I peeped into their rooms to see what they were doing; the one who most interested me was making “nudels” to put into soup. Deftly cutting long strips of dough on a board which lay across a chair, and then spreading them to dry on—what? I must tell the fact as I saw it. She was spreading those nudels on a bed. The bed, I might say, for it was the only one left in the suite of two rooms. The family, seven in all, would sleep on the roof that night, and the nudels would occupy what was left of the bed. Up on the roof the inhabitants of the two upper floors were holding converse; sweet, no doubt, but as I am not conversant with Hebrew, I must be excused from repeating it. I am too much of a Desartian, however, to mistake the gestures they made as invitations to make our stay a long one, though I remained long enough to see two women, the ugliest and the most beautiful I ever beheld—mother and daughter. The mother was so hideously ugly that at first sight I thought that she was dreadfully deformed, but she was not, except as a fearful spirit of greed had twisted her body. The daughter, a superb young creature, was lovely as an Islamite’s dream of an hour. Many of these women are extremely beautiful in youth, but becoming wives and mothers at fifteen or sixteen, at five-and-twenty they are almost old women.

Cleanliness is evidently not a vital part of their creed—at least the quilts and pillows they were beginning to spread about would not seem to indicate it.

We had been there only a minute or two when an awe-inspiring figure, a very old man, with a skull cap covering his venerable head, and arrayed in a strange-looking, long-skirted kaftan, moved toward us. As I say I do not understand Hebrew, but should any one ever again give me in Hebrew, or in any other tongue, such another pressing invitation to make his people my people, and his roof my abiding place, I should accept it with the same hurried eagerness I did his—I should run away, in fact, as I did then. In my downward course I fell over four children and got lost three times, but breathless but nothing daunted we reached the pavement in course of time, and the Mulberry Street roofs became our next venture.

The top of the street was too painfully respectable for us, so we proceeded at once to its most densely packed portion, known as "The Bend" just where it turns in sight of the famous "Five Points." The Five Points are fast losing their reputation as the worst and most dangerous place in America. The reformation which the police vainly tried for years to effect is being accomplished quietly and steadily by a mission which began its labours in one tiny room, but which now owns a fine building in one of the very points from which the place takes its name. As we walked down the Bend what a change from two hours before! Scarcely a figure to be seen walking about; but in doorways, on the pavements out to the very curb, and, in several places, in the centre of the narrow street, were recumbent figures, men, women, children—a motley crowd seeking slumber and air. We stole about among them as quietly as possible. Occasionally a disturbed sleeper would start to his elbow, one hand instinctively seeking a shining sharp something in his bosom, but Tom, warned by our reception in the Jewish quarters, had pressed into service, as guide, one of the best known officers of the precinct, and the disturbed one seeing him would sink back again.

"You can see about all there is to see of the Roofers right here in these two houses," said the officer, "the rest are only variations of the same thing; but first you must go through into the court and see

what chance there is for air to circulate about the buildings."

Following him we were led through a long hall in which lay nine sleepers, out into a little roofless box called by courtesy a court. On all sides rise, storey after storey, houses whose frail fire-escapes were crowded with people vainly trying to find comfort. There was not an opening anywhere that had not its occupant. In the very court where we stood there were three men sleeping. Into the house and up the many flights of stairs we were guided by the officer who knows the Bend so well that he can find his way in the dark. When we reached the roof we were met by the person of the house, who demanded our errand. She spoke English very well, and being reassured by the officer's presence, volunteered considerable information about her lodgers, and spoke at length of her next-door neighbours.

"Neapolitan alla them—lazy, dirty, no gooda loafer; you see my house, clean; you see that one—ugh! Alla Genoesse here, never Neapolitan, non, non, signore."

Caste is perhaps nowhere more strongly marked than in the New York Italian emigrants. The Genoesse feel their own superiority very strongly, and not without reason, for of all the thousands of poor Italians who have landed at Castle Garden and overflowed New York, the lowest and laziest are the Neapolitans.

While the landlady was enlarging upon the thieving propensities of her neighbours from Naples, I took in the scene about me. The roof was tarred and sprinkled with sand, and in the still fierce heat—the very walls seemed to exhale hot waves—its odour was strongly apparent. The entire roof was covered with thick planks set edgewise about three feet apart, and across from one to the other were nailed at intervals slender boards, thus forming a kind of continuous rack, so that the sleepers did not touch the tar. The rooms below had been almost entirely denuded of the little furniture they usually held, and anything that could be lain on or used as a pillow was made to do duty. The place was as thickly covered as its space would allow, and had it not been for the tall wooden paling about the edge, some one would surely have been crowded off. Sometimes a man walking in his sleep has been known to step off where the fence was defective, and the officer showed us a place, in that very roof, where a little girl had crept

through a broken paling and fallen five storeys to the stones below.

As we descended the officer stopped at one or two of the rooms, and when he threw the light of his little lantern into them I saw that the landlady's boast of cleanliness was a true one; everything that could be scrubbed was as clean as sand, water, and earnestness could make it. The Italian's instinctive reaching towards the beautiful, which must be strong indeed to survive in such a place, showed itself in the attempted decoration of those wretched little rooms. Bits of bright paper and strips of gay cloth, doubtless culled from their rag-picking carts, were made into flowers which hung about the crucifix, or woven into a lambrequin for the shelf which supported it, and in one room there hung a remembrance of years passed in Spain—a matador's cap.

"Now you'd better take good care to hold your dress from the floor," was the officer's advice to me as we entered the house where dwelt the "dirty no gooda" Neapolitane. Such a place! such a place! the hydrant in the first hall had been leaking profusely and the floor was wet in places, but, notwithstanding, it was covered with alumberers. We did not pause in it, but went at once to the court, and there we saw that most barbarous monument of the landlord's greed—a "rear tenement"—a house built in what should be the court for the surrounding buildings, and having no entrance from the street save through the other tenements, or by a long, low corridor built through their walls. Not only was it so close to the buildings about it that the air could not possibly circulate with any freedom, but it was much lower than they. It was literally packed from basement to roof with poor wretches who, half clad, had tumbled down anywhere to sleep. The rooms having an outer window were stifling, and a moment in a tiny bedroom having no window but one opening on a dark hall sent me flying out of it. In one such room slept a man, his wife, and three children; and in the little room adjoining it three other children, for there is seldom room on the roof for more than the upper two floors. Many of the room-holders take lodgers, and a policeman is constantly kept on the look-out for illegal overcrowding.

On the roof the scene was almost beyond belief, unless one were to see it with his own eyes. On one side were beams running parallel the length of the roof and

about six feet apart, and between these were fastened strips of coarse canvas to serve as bunks, similar to the beds in a New York seven cent lodging-house. The rest of the sleepers lay on the sand-covered roof, many with no pillows save their own arms. The whole scene was clearly lighted by a splendid moon, and looked more a dream than a reality. One pretty girl of nineteen had removed the body of her gown and lay with her head resting on it, her fine arms and shoulders bare. As I stooped over her, a girl not much older than myself, the difference—which was through no virtue of my own nor fault of hers—swelled my heart with a great ache. She must have slipped from her pillow once, for one soft shoulder was dented with the sand which covered the tarred roof, yet she slept on as peacefully as if she were sheltered and cared for as such a pretty thing ought to have been. I took a bunch of violets I had in my belt and gently sprinkled them in her loose, soft hair and on her smooth throat, and then stole away—sentimental I know, but I did want her to touch something sweet.

From house to house we went, but found only variations of the same thing. On one roof we saw a bit of the picturesque as well as the poverty of Italy. A young man and girl—his sweetheart, I fancied—were leaning against a chimney, and while he softly tinkled an old guitar she sang under her breath to a sleepy accompaniment of growling protests from the tired ones about her. On another roof every one was asleep save an old woman, who sat by the alumbering form of a youth, evidently her son, so slender and perfectly formed that he might have been a young Mercury done in bronze. The intense heat of the night had made him throw open the neck of his shirt, and she sat with one wrinkled old hand on his smooth young chest, and with the other was slipping the beads of a rosary. The quick tears leaped to my eyes. Ah, her fine strong lad, how proud she was of him, and did she not pray for him as fervently as though she watched by a silken couch!

The last tenement we visited was a very low, small, two-storey house in Baxter Street. The ground-floor is occupied by horses. Yes, it is a regular stable. There surely must be truth in the theory that a place where horses live, no matter how filthy, is never so dangerous to health as a similar habitation of human beings. Were it not so, that stable in conjunction with

the fearful court behind it must, in spite of the disinfectants continually placed in such places by the health officers, have long since bred the most dreadful diseases. As we were about to enter we were met by a policeman, who drove before him six or seven men who were ejaculating all the Italian they could think of appropriate to the occasion. One, especially fluent, added to his Italian a very English word beginning with a big, big "D." The first English these people learn on landing in America, by-the-bye, is "Hello!" and the word just mentioned; sometimes "hello" is misplaced, as for instance, when they mean good-bye, but that other word never. The exodus was only occasioned by the nightly weeding out of the hobbed within; fifteen minutes after the officer left they would all be back again. The upper floor of the house we were inspecting was occupied by three families with so many children that even the officer could only approximate their number. There is a bend in the long, low passage leading from the street to the court, and just as we reached it a man sprang out of the darkness, slipped under the officer's arm, and sped away down the street. I expected to see something awful when we reached the court, but it was too common a sight to affect the officer—only a woman pacing to and fro with a little baby, who showed every symptom of sun-stroke, clasped in her arms, while the baby's father lay on the pavement dead drunk, cut and bleeding, and stunned by a blow dealt by the man who had passed us. Fancy, if you can, what relief a sick child could get in that place, closed on three sides by tall buildings, and opening from those stables.

The last of the Roofers we saw were the men who sleep along the docks and on the flat roofs of the piers, not at all bad lodgings in New York's summer weather. There used to be a pier on the North River side of the city where the "dock-wallpapers" and "stevedores" would bring their "best girls," and while some one played the accordion they would have the gayest balls imaginable. In consideration of the immense numbers crowded into the lower, poorer part of the city, and of the intense summer heat, the authorities have been talking of ordering all the new covered piers to be built with flat tops, so they may be used as promenades and lounging-places for the poorer classes. If this be done there will never be a summer's night on which thousands—glad to escape

from their little close lodgings and get a taste of the sweet salt air blowing over the harbour—will not thank the man who first thought of the kindly plan.

THE RED ROOM.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

SIR RICHARD, who was always an early riser, was up earlier than usual next morning. As he purposely went out of his way to pass the door of the Red Room he felt a strong inclination to knock and, as he put it to himself, make sure that it was all right. However, reflecting that perhaps his friend might be annoyed, or, at any rate, would be sure to ridicule him, he thought better of it, persuading himself that it was not likely that anything could happen to a man like Vernon, who had seen any amount of hard fighting in all quarters of the globe, and knew how to take care of himself if any one did. In spite of this conviction he found himself unable to settle to anything, or to carry out any of his ordinary ante-breakfast programme. So he fidgeted about, in and out, driving the servants to distraction by the irregular and unforeseen nature of his movements, until a few of the more advanced stragglers began to put in an appearance and greet him with encomiums on the weather and cheerful anticipations of good sport, to all of which he replied a good deal at random. This being observed by Lady Marsden, she proceeded to add to his perturbation by telegraphing enquiries with her eyebrows over the urn. As a last resource it occurred to him to put an enquiry to one of the servants.

"Do you know, James, whether Major Vernon is—— Ab, here he is. Good heavens!"

The exclamation caused everybody to look up and cast curious and enquiring glances from the man who had uttered it to the other who had provoked the same.

"Why, Major," remarked that very young Cattermole who had previously inspired such exceedingly inhospitable sentiments in the generally genial host, "why, Major, how uncommonly seedy you look this morning!"

"Confound his impertinence!" muttered Sir Richard.

"And how on earth did you come by that scratch? Looks as though you'd been out fighting cats on the tiles."

This had the effect of immediately diverting all attention from Sir Richard, and concentrating it on the Major, who was understood to mutter something vague about his hand having slipped in shaving. An explanation which, instead of clearing up matters, only made them worse, for, as young Cattermole subsequently remarked to a friend, "a fellow doesn't generally cut himself from the corner of his eye to his chin in shaving. Besides, a cut is a cut, and a scratch is a scratch, and there is no mistaking the sign of finger-nails."

A sudden sense of restraint seemed to settle down upon those who sat round that well-spread board—a feeling of something "being up," something wrong, instinctively taking possession of the minds even of those who were least acquainted with any cause for the sensation. Sir Richard kept casting furtive glances at his friend, who, independently of the mysterious mark upon his face, certainly merited the expression, "seedy," which had been applied to him. It being also noticeable that, not only did he eat little or nothing, but, when he received his cup of coffee, his hand shook so that half its contents were spilled; and, above all, there was a peculiar lividness underlying the tan of his complexion, productive of a singularly unwholesome effect.

The result of all this upon Lady Marsden was such that she did the wildest things with the sugar tongs, while her general conversation was suggestive of that highly-improving game known as "cross questions and crooked answers."

At the very first opportunity Sir Richard took his friend aside.

"Now, then," he said, "I want to know the truth."

For a moment it appeared as though the other were going to prevaricate.

"The truth!" he repeated. "The truth as to what?"

Then, noting the genuine distress upon Sir Richard's countenance, he altered his tone.

"Dick, old fellow," he said, "I don't know what to say, and I don't know what to think."

"Then there is something in it, after all!" enquired Sir Richard excitedly.

"Dick," answered the other, chewing one end of his long moustache reflectively, "if any one had told you I was an out-and-out coward, what should you have said?"

"Said!" exclaimed his friend; "I

should have told them they didn't know anything about it."

The other smiled a strange, inscrutable smile as he answered:

"It's the truth, Dick."

Then, sinking his voice into a chilling whisper:

"Last night I was afraid—for the first time in my life, and I hope the last."

Sir Richard opened his mouth twice without being able to find utterance. The third time he was more successful, and contrived to put the question:

"What of?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"I give you my word of honour, Dick, I don't know."

"Did you see anything?" The question was put hesitatingly.

"No."

"Then you heard——"

"Nothing."

At this extraordinary state of affairs Sir Richard's condition took such an alarming turn for the worse that his friend, in pity, made an effort at explanation.

"Look here, all I know is this. I fell asleep almost directly, and must have slept some time undisturbed. All at once I became aware of some great horror overshadowing me as I lay in a condition between sleeping and waking. I felt some terrible danger threatened me, but what it was I could not discern. I seemed to be asleep, and yet was perfectly aware of my surroundings, and made several frantic efforts to wake. Then came a sensation of utter darkness—of darkness that could be felt—an expression which I fancy I have heard sometime or other in church; at any rate it exactly explains my condition at the time."

The Major paused for a moment to wipe away the perspiration which had started out upon his forehead. Sir Richard kept his eyes fixed on his friend and never moved them for an instant during the recital.

The other resumed.

"Now comes the worst. In the midst of that horror of darkness a struggle appeared to take place—a struggle in which I was contending against something, what or whom I cannot say, nor even whether the encounter in which I was engaged was mental or physical. I knew a man once—it was when I was in India—who was strangled by a cobra while he was asleep.

I fancy his sensations must have been something like mine."

He shuddered and was silent for a second.

"How long the struggle lasted I cannot say. To me it seemed hours, but it might have been only minutes or even seconds. Again and again I felt that I was on the point of being overcome, and again and again I resisted the unknown but terrible fate that seemed to threaten me. At last, when I felt that it was impossible to hold out longer, I found myself involuntarily repeating, over and over again, a verse that, as a child, I was taught to say before I went to sleep, and which I had no idea I had retained in my memory all these years:

"Four corners to my bed,
Four angels overhead,
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on."

He broke off here and seemed to challenge the other to laugh at him. Sir Richard, however, did nothing of the sort, but only stared at him with the same fixed stare as before.

"I tell you I found myself repeating these childish words over and over again until it seemed that the blackness became less black and the struggle less fearful, and—well, I can't exactly say I woke, for, as I have told you and now tell you again, I was more or less conscious the whole time, but I found myself sitting upright with the perspiration dripping from me and the light just beginning to steal in through the windows."

As he concluded he was again compelled to wipe the moisture from his forehead.

"But," and it seemed to cause Sir Richard a considerable effort to put the question, "how did you come by that?"

And he drew his own finger across his cheek in the same direction as that taken by the scratch which disfigured his friend's countenance.

"I don't know," was the answer. "All I do know is that it was not there last night though it was the first thing I saw this morning when I looked in the glass."

"Well," said Sir Richard, after a pause, during which he kept his eyes fixed on the scratch, "of course you don't sleep there again, even if we have to make you up a bed on the billiard-table."

"What!" was the indignant response, "do you think I am going to give in like that?"

"But, surely, after your experience of last night——" began the other blankly.

"Do you wish to insult me?" burst in the Major. "Good heavens, man, surely you know me better than that! Offer me any other room and I leave the house."

Then calming down a little:

"Look here, Dick, if you don't want me to regret the confidence I've shown in you, let me have my own way for—well, for another couple of nights at any rate. Come, now, I ask it as a favour?"

"But—but what am I to say to my wife? She suspects something already, and will be sure to insist on knowing all about it."

"Tell her—oh, tell her I had the nightmare," answered the Major. "After all it will be the truth, or something very much like it. By-the-bye, whose portrait is that over the mantelpiece in the Red Room?"

"Portrait?" echoed Sir Richard; "there's no portrait that I know of. Only an old landscape that has hung there ever since I can remember."

The day was fine and the birds plentiful, and as Major Vernon found that, in spite of all, his hand and eye were equally to be depended on, his spirits rose in proportion as his recollections of the previous night became less vivid, until he found himself almost blushing at the remembrance of his terrible feelings.

He was still inclined to the same view of the subject when night came; in spite of which he did not forget to subject the picture over the mantelpiece to another investigation.

"Somehow I forgot to notice it by daylight," he said to himself, "but I will take the present opportunity to convince myself which it actually is—whether landscape or portrait."

Again he threw the light of the candle upon the dark canvas.

"Landscape, by Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "Can it have been my eyes that played me such a trick before? Strange, too, for I can recall the woman's face so plainly, with its evil expression. And then that hand, with the long curved nails—just the sort of nails to——"

A thought struck him. He crossed to the dressing-table where the old-fashioned mirror, broader than it was long, reflected a countenance which now bore an expression quite the opposite to its ordinarily somewhat blasé one.

The long red scratch stood out with startling and angry distinctness.

"Strange," he murmured, "very strange!"

"Why, Major," remarked young Cattermole again at breakfast next morning, "you look even seedier to-day than you did yesterday. Somehow or other your night's rest doesn't seem to agree with you."

As before, public attention was immediately centred upon the individual thus pointedly referred to. Sir Richard glared at the one and looked anxiously at the other; while Lady Marsden, observing thunder in the atmosphere and making an effort to turn the conversation, helped herself to marmalade instead of mustard—a mistake which she accounted for by observing that they both began with the same letter, which made it very confusing.

Apart from the Major's appearance, which was best described by the term ghastly, there was something unfamiliar about him that at once struck Sir Richard without his being able, for the moment, to determine in what it consisted. Meanwhile the object of so much undesired solicitude, feeling compelled to account in some way for the too evident deterioration in his outer man, muttered something about "a touch of his old complaint"—which as it might have been jaundice, lumbago, dyspepsia, toothache, or a hundred other ills, opened up a wide field for conjecture, such as had the welcome effect of staving off young Cattermole's unwelcome attention for the remainder of the meal.

All at once Sir Richard succeeded in solving to his satisfaction the cause of the alteration in his friend's appearance.

"It's the collar," he told himself; "I never remember to have seen Vernon in one of those stiff, upright, all-round affairs before. I wonder what has made him take to that style all at once? And I wonder whether he had another attack of nightmare, or anything of the sort, last night?"

Both questions were answered later on.

"What sort of a night did I have, you ask?" said the Major. "Just look here."

He removed collar and tie, thus laying bare his throat, upon the surface of which several bluish marks and discolourations were visible.

"What—what on earth!" Sir Richard stuttered and stammered.

"What does it mean, you ask? That is just the question that I have been putting to myself. You remember what I told you yesterday of my experience of the night before? Well, it was just the same thing over again, only, if possible, more vivid and acute. There was the same horror of darkness—though, as before, I was half conscious of my surroundings—followed by that impotent struggling against something vague, intangible, and terrible. But this time it was accompanied by a sense of suffocation. Something, I thought, was slowly prassing the life out of me—my breath was almost exhausted, when, by a fearful effort, which it distresses me even to recall, I forced myself upright, feeling, somehow, that this time I had only escaped by the skin of my teeth—though from what I don't know."

"Vernon," said Sir Richard, "after this you cannot, you must not dream of occupying the room another night."

A dogged expression settled upon the other man's countenance.

"I mean to see this thing through," he answered, "and nothing that you can urge will alter my determination. One more night and then——"

"Did you ever," his host put the question in a solemn, stealthy manner, "did you ever hear the story in connection with the Red Room? I have almost forgotten it myself, but I may as well tell you what I do know."

"No, no," was the hasty response, "not now, I will not hear it now. Wait one more night—wait until to-morrow and tell me then."

CHAPTER III.

THAT day passed as had the previous one, and night came again.

"I wonder," said the Major, as he contemplated himself grimly in the mirror, in which he saw reflected plainly the long red scratch upon his face, as well as the purple discolourations upon his throat; "I wonder what other personal embellishments I may have to boast of by this time to-morrow? Perhaps a black eye or a broken nose. Well, there is only this one night."

This time he did not fall asleep so quickly. For some time he lay watching the fire as it burnt itself out. A sudden spurt of flame made a momentary illumination by which the picture over the mantelpiece became plainly visible.

"By Jove!" he muttered, raising himself on his elbow, "the portrait again, by all that's mysterious!"

The flame died out as quickly as it had kindled, but the last thing it showed him was the gleam of those malignant eyes, and those long, curved, talon-like fingers.

For a moment he debated as to whether he should rise and turn the picture to the wall, but disinclination to stir, together with a fierce contempt of his own weakness, kept him where he was. Then he dozed, or seemed to doze, though through it all he was aware of that face looking down upon him, and gradually coming nearer and nearer, until he felt those basilisk orbs glaring straight into his own in spite of the closed lids and—

With an effort he regained possession of his senses, at least, of so much of them as allowed him to become conscious of—what?

The fire, which had appeared to have died out, suddenly revived, sending forth a dull red glow that revealed to him plainly the outlines of the furniture in the room, and the curtains of the bed, bringing out strange, unsuspected tints in these last, of which he found himself idly taking note.

"It is the colour of blood," he murmured—"the colour of blood—the colour——"

Was it the effect of the firelight flickering upon it, or did one of the curtains at the foot of the bed move?

Yes, it was being drawn back slowly and noiselessly. What was that? Surely, an arm—a long, lean, brown arm, with a hand terminating in curved, claw-like fingers and long, pointed nails.

A horror, such as few are ever destined to experience, fell upon him as he realised this. His limbs became powerless, and his tongue felt like a piece of dried leather in his mouth. Then the curtain was dropped and the thing disappeared.

But instead of this proving a relief, the thought of its being there—somewhere—hidden—but still there—was so full of unspeakable terror, that he could almost have prayed to see it again.

Where was it? Where was it?

He rolled his head—the only portion of his body in which was any power of movement—on the pillow in the endeavour to— Ah!

Casting his eyes upwards he caught sight of it smoothly insinuating its way through the canopy overhead. It was

going to attack him from above while he lay there helpless, like a log, and could not even cry aloud for deliverance from the cursed thing. And all the time he knew not even whether he was sleeping or waking.

With an effort he succeeded in closing his eyes. But only for a second; for the uncertainty as to what was about to happen was more awful than anything else. So he opened them again, and, no—it was there no longer.

He tried to move his head as he had before, but it was fixed—fixed as in a vice. From head to foot he was like a dead man—a dead man!

What was that?

Something was moving softly and delicately—travelling over the pillow towards him. It was an arm, a long, lean, brown arm—a woman's arm—an arm that had no body belonging to it—which was slipping, slowly but surely, over the pillow towards the place where his head lay, and drawing nearer and nearer, nearer and nearer, with the fingers curved and the long, sharp, cruel nails glistening horribly. To think that he could not utter a sound—not the very faintest sound, though his life depended on it! And the arm—the long, brown, bodiless arm—was coming nearer and nearer; in another second those fingers would have clutched his throat, those long nails be embedded in his flesh and—

Sir Richard was uneasy in his mind. He could not sleep; indeed he did not even try to sleep. Irresistibly the idea was suggested to him that his friend—his very oldest and best friend—was threatened by some vague, but no less unmistakable peril.

"He wouldn't let me tell him the story of the Red Room, though, after all, I don't know what good that would have done. Still, I wish I had done so, and I wish even more that it would not keep presenting itself so plainly to my mind, when I had almost forgotten it, too."

A clock struck in the distance and Sir Richard took a sudden determination.

"I'll just slip on some clothes and go upstairs and creep along the passage to the door of his room. Perhaps he doesn't lock his door, or he may have forgotten it for once—at any rate I can listen and then, if everything seems all right, I can come away without disturbing any one, and my mind will be more at ease."

The determination once formed was

speedily put into practice, and Sir Richard found himself, candle in hand, stealing like a thief at dead of night up the stairs and along the passages of his own house.

The Red Room lay some distance away from his own apartment, and at the rate at which he was travelling he had ample time in which to change his mind with regard to his purpose, and bestow various uncomplimentary epithets upon himself. When he reached the door, however, he told himself that he might just as well try it and see whether it was locked or not. He would do so very softly, without disturbing any one, and accordingly had laid his hand upon the lock, when—

His ear was caught by a sound from within—a muffled, gasping, choking sound—a sound that suggested horrible possibilities. Whether the door was locked or not he never knew. In another instant he had burst it open.

"Hal!" he cried, "Hal! What is it! For Heaven's sake answer me!"

But there was no answer. Only the sound continued, though much fainter, as though it would soon cease altogether.

He rushed to the bed, tore aside the curtain, and saw—what?

The face of his friend, convulsed, agonised, almost black with—what was that thing clutching his throat?

It looked like a hand—a small, brown, woman's hand.

Whatever it was, Sir Richard flung himself upon it, but even as he seemed to grasp it, it melted away and there was nothing but the bare throat of the man before him, whose breathing seemed now to have ceased altogether.

Hardly knowing what he did, Sir Richard rushed to the window and flung it open; then, returning, caught up the water jug and half deluged the bed and its occupant with its contents. Fortunately this Spartan treatment appeared to suit the case, for, after a few premonitory symptoms of returning consciousness, Sir Richard had the satisfaction of seeing his friend open his eyes.

Catching sight of the familiar but anxious countenance bending over him, a look of relief crossed his face, followed by another of perplexed enquiry as to his whereabouts and the reason of his unpleasantly damp condition.

This, in turn, was succeeded by one of horror, as, raising his head from his pillow, he looked round him and asked in a queer, strangled, barely audible voice:

"Is it gone?"

"What?" enquired Sir Richard with intense eagerness.

To which the other, speaking thickly, and as though it pained him, answered with a shudder:

"That long, brown arm!"

Next morning there was considerable comment excited by the appearance of the Major with a bandage round his throat.

"Sore throat! Lost his voice," remarked the irrepressible young Cattermole later on to a crony. "What an unfortunate beggar the fellow is. Still, for all that, I don't see any reason why Sir Richard should have lost his temper, and as nearly as possible told me to mind my own business, when I happened to ask the Major whether he had felt anything of it yesterday, or whether it came on suddenly in the night."

"And what is the original story in connection with the Red Room?" asked the Major on the very first opportunity when he and his host were alone, and the former's voice was a little restored to him.

"Well," was the answer, "all I know is that a long time ago—a hundred years or more—one of my ancestors took for a second wife a woman of foreign extraction, who came from no one knew where. His first wife had died leaving him with one son, and in due course this new wife presented him with another. She was, according to report, of a strange, fierce nature, and her husband and every one else went in fear of her. As time went on she began to show signs of intense jealousy and hatred towards her stepson, who, on his father's death, would naturally succeed him. Towards her own offspring she exhibited the same degree of savage affection which a tigress may be supposed to lavish upon her young.

"As these two youths grew up they bore a strong family resemblance, in spite of the difference of parentage on the female side; what was more they were—for step-brothers—unusually attached to each other. This mutual affection, however, so far from softening the mother of the younger, merely seemed to inspire her with fiercer wrath and envy towards her husband's elder son and heir. So one night, having excited herself to a murderous rage against the young man who stood between her son and the title and estate, she stole to the room where her stepson slept——"

"The Red Room," interpolated the Major.

"The Red Room," acquiesced Sir Richard, "and with her own hands——"

"Well, go on," impatiently, as Sir Richard paused in order to accentuate the denouement.

"With her own hands strangled the sleeper."

"Her own stepson," commented the Major. "Ugh! what a ghastly story!"

"Hear it out," said Sir Richard. "It was night when she committed the crime. As soon as it was light she returned, possibly to gloat over her victim, instead of which she made a terrible discovery."

"And that was?"

"For some freak or other the two step-brothers had changed apartments. The younger, on that particular night, had occupied his elder brother's room and bed, so that her awful act had reverted upon her own head, and instead of the hated elder she had killed her own only son."

"Horrible!" exclaimed the Major. "More than horrible! Is anything further known about her?"

"Very little, beyond the fact that she is supposed to have perished by her own hand."

The Major mused for a moment before putting the next question.

"Have you a portrait of her anywhere?"

Sir Richard shook his head.

"I believe there was one; but what became of it I do not know. Possibly it was destroyed by some one who considered that, as the original was no credit to the name, the preservation of the duplicate would be more or less of an insult to the rest of the family portraits."

"Then you know absolutely nothing respecting her appearance?"

"Well, I have heard that she was remarkable for her brown, swarthy skin; so much so, indeed, that she was known by the nickname of 'the gipsy.'"

Major Vernon is sometimes asked how he came by that peculiar long red mark which is more like a scratch than a scar, and which it seems he will carry with him to the grave.

His explanation is not very lucid, and it is generally known among his friends that he dislikes any reference to it. As for those marks on his throat, as he always wears a high collar very few are aware of their existence.

The Red Room has never been occupied since, for the very good reason that Sir Richard has caused the entrance to it to be bricked up.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "*Alexia*," "*Red Towers*," "*The Little One*," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE DAY BEFORE THE WEDDING.

It is no use lingering over the history of the spring months at Bryans, as their slow passing brought the double wedding nearer.

Poppy hardly knew why she was not quite happy, for Arthur wrote to her constantly, and Mrs. Nugent sent accounts of his health which were more and more cheerful. She, at least, was a happy and triumphant woman. In the mind of her future daughter-in-law there were no fears for the future. To her Arthur seemed still the charming, handsome, sweet-natured young soldier who had won her heart so suddenly at Saint-Carolus, or perhaps more truly at Herzheim—for Poppy secretly thought that she and Arthur were a proof of the existence of love at first sight, the most beautiful possibility of human nature. Thus, when she seriously asked herself why everything in life did not now show such rosy colours as belonged to last September, she never thought of blaming Arthur for the change in herself. The uncertainty of his health was quite enough to account for any moody fancies he might have shown in the winter. He was stronger now, the cold weather was nearly gone: all brightness would come back with May.

Poppy only wished—and this she thought was her chief trouble—that her friend Maggie could be as happy as herself. She was seriously concerned about Maggie. The girl was almost losing her beauty, so thin and pale had she grown. Her old liveliness, her pretty, affectionate ways, seemed all gone. She avoided Poppy instead of flying to her on every occasion, and spent most of her time in her grandfather's sick-room. Her engagement to Geoffrey dragged its length along, and to judge by their faces, made neither of them at all happier. Poppy saw too plainly what a mistake that engagement had been. Sometimes, often indeed, the remembrance of Geoffrey Thorne's silent confession sent through all her well-balanced nature a shiver that burned like flame. How dared he?

One day, after a painful effort at the old affectionate freedom with Maggie, she kissed the girl and asked her if she was happy.

"Don't marry him if—if you are not quite sure," she whispered.

It seemed impossible to give a stronger hint than this of the risk that Maggie was running. But the girl turned her head away, shook her shoulder free from the hand that lay upon it, and answered with a quick hardness of tone:

"I am quite sure. There's not a better man living than Geoffrey."

After that Poppy could say no more; but she allowed a barrier to rise between herself and her neighbours. Poor, desolate liege lady, it was only too plain that her vassals did not want her any more, that some sort of shadow fell upon them with her presence. She said nothing, but wished for the summer, when things would have become irrevocable, and new lives, both for herself and Maggie, would have begun. For her aunt and the Rector she had nothing but an even sweetness, which helped to salve Miss Latimer's troublesome conscience, and to keep the Rector in a state of blindness as to the origin of the clouds which sometimes swept over his little lady.

In the middle of April, Mrs. Nugent and Arthur arrived in London from Cannes, and Poppy and her aunt went up to meet them. The southern sun had done a good deal for Arthur; his skin looked darker, his eyes brighter than before. He was very handsome; the languor of his manner was now only graceful and pleasant, having lost its winter peevishness, and towards Poppy he showed a gentle devotion that gave great satisfaction to his mother and Miss Latimer. Evidently he was come back in the best frame of mind, determined to be a good boy. Poppy wished him to come down to Bryans before the wedding, but he made some excuse for which Miss Latimer blessed him in her heart. He would not come before a certain Wednesday in the second week of May. On the next day, Thursday, at two o'clock in the afternoon, he and Poppy, and Geoffrey Thorne and Maggie, were to be married in the old church at Bryans.

The weeks rolled quickly on and brought that Wednesday. As it approached, Geoffrey Thorne grew every day graver and more thoughtful, yet kinder, even more tender, in his manner towards

the girl to whom he had offered his life. She was herself seldom to be seen outside Church Corner. The old man was failing fast, and though he might live for months or years, another stroke might bring the end at any time. Maggie would herself have put off the wedding, but her grandfather's one wish was to know that it was over, and that she was safely Geoffrey's wife. He had taken a kind of fancy to Lucy Thorne, and she had promised to watch him while Geoffrey and Maggie went away for a fortnight. Then they were coming back to Church Corner, to stay with him as long as he lived. It did not cost Geoffrey much to agree to this. To the wedding itself he looked forward with horror, wondering how he could ever have consented to such an arrangement. But after all, it was only one thing more to be lived through.

Poppy had come down from London happier than she had been all the spring. Everything looked bright to her now. Arthur's influence had been peaceful, not disturbing; he seemed so light-hearted about the future that she was obliged to believe, in spite of herself, that everything would turn out well. On the evening of her return she sent Maggie a diamond ring, with a few affectionate words hastily written. They did not alter the fact that in old days she would have taken it to the girl herself, and put it on her finger with a kiss; and perhaps Maggie felt this, for it was a lame and stiff little note that she sent her friend in answer. But tears ran down on the ring as she looked at it.

The week that was fixed for the wedding began and continued with that soft, exquisite brilliancy which still sometimes belongs to May, justifying her old claim to be queen of all the months in the year. The beech-woods shone in the warm sunlight that seemed absolutely to sparkle among the light polished green of their young leaves; the oaks and the tall poplars, as the sun caught them, were yellow like gold. All the leaves were bursting from their winter sheaths, the fresh grass was growing. Primroses and bluebells and cowslips were not over; but lilacs were coming into scented bloom, hawthorn buds were swelling, young ferns uncurling themselves. The white clouds that lay in lazy lines on a sky of clear, deep, dazzling blue did not even suggest a shower. At night the moon shone on a still, sweet world in which storms seemed unknown.

On that Wednesday Bryans was in full swing of preparation. The double wedding made a double excitement, for "young Geoffrey Thorne" was a little of a hero, even beyond his own hamlet, and had always been popular. Bryans thought it quite right, though the county smiled at a foolish scrap of romance, that Miss Latimer should choose to be married at the same time as her pretty village friend and the man who had saved her life in Paris. So the parish was a good deal roused, on the whole, from its usual sleepiness, and when the Rector and Miss Fanny walked down from the Court, early in the afternoon, to see how things were getting on, and whether the church was ready for the next day, they found several arches in course of being put up in the village street. They walked slowly through the wood, past Church Corner, and along the road to the churchyard gate, meeting many friendly smiles by the way.

None of the wedding guests had arrived yet. Only Arthur Nugent had come down that morning; and Mr. Cantillon, with whom he was to stay that night, had taken him to the Court to luncheon, now leaving him there with Poppy in the garden. The Rector was pleased with Arthur's improved appearance, and Miss Latimer smiled and agreed with him, though in a rather pre-occupied way.

"I must forget my prejudices now," said Mr. Cantillon. "After all, Arthur may make a tolerable squire. He is a good-looking fellow, and perhaps not really conceited, though I hate that manner of his. That sort of indifference, too, makes me angry. Why, I had to wait twenty minutes at least before he was ready to walk up with me this morning. Though I see you every day, Fanny, I was the most impatient of the two."

"We must not expect a young man of the period to be like you, dear," said Fanny smiling. "You are romantic, you know."

"Romantic! I am in love," said the Rector. "And that is what he ought to be. I hope he is, I'm sure; but nothing can ever make him good enough for her. However, as I say, we must make the best of him. What a sky! Happy is the bride that the sun shines on. I hope they will both be happy—both the brides. I have more doubt about that other marriage, you know. This may turn out well enough, though it is not ideal; but poor Geoffrey Thorne is very much on my mind—very much indeed. He is so much too good

for that girl; and she, poor thing! does not look happy either. Geoffrey avoids me—well, perhaps it is natural. I never thought he would marry anybody, and he knows it."

"Very much better that he should. I think it is an excellent marriage," said Miss Latimer firmly. "I have never changed my opinion about that."

"I wish they both looked happier. But, Fanny, to tell you the truth, I don't think any one is quite happy, except you and I."

"That is a strong argument against early marriages. Perhaps we had better wait ten years longer. Think it over, Henry. We might grow happier every year."

"Thank you, I'm quite satisfied. I want nothing more, not even delay. Do you know, my dear, I shall be glad when this wedding is over, for your sake, and not quite selfishly. Porphyria's affairs have worried you too much. I have thought so for several months. I never liked to tease you, but I have often wished to know the reason of a certain little air of worry. Even to-day, when I came in with Arthur, I thought some *contretemps*—well, there was something mysterious which depressed me slightly. What was it, Fanny?"

Miss Fanny Latimer did not answer instantly. This was partly because a moment's glance at the Rector seemed to show her depths of sweetness and trustworthiness which actually brought happy tears into those bright blue eyes of hers, and with them an odd feeling in her throat which made words impossible. It was a mixed consciousness that Henry, being too good for this world, would certainly have spoiled everything if she had told him her trouble in the winter, and also that she might at any time in the future confide all, without fearing a word of reproach. Even now, she thought, she might safely say anything. The day before the wedding was almost as safe as the day after, and she would really be much happier when Henry knew all.

At this moment, however, she could not speak, for they had reached the churchyard gate, where several village girls were busy twisting evergreens round the arch that had already been set up there. The churchyard grass was being mown, the path swept; the church itself was being cleaned with tremendous energy, and the Rector made his way up the long paved aisle through an array of pails and brooms and past streams of water. The afternoon

sun shone softly into the stately old choir, with its tombs of Fitz-Bryans and Latimers.

Fanny sat down in a safe place by the door, and with a preoccupied mind watched the Rector's small dark figure moving about the choir. She knew that he was planning and rehearsing once more the ceremony of to-morrow, feeling anxiously responsible that all should go well; his boyish, simple mind fully sharing in the feeling of the village, that such a wedding as this had seldom, if ever, taken place in Bryans Church before.

Fanny, as she watched him, felt herself overcome by a great weariness. To her, she thought, when this wedding was once over there would come perfect rest and the end of all worries. Though she had done so much in helping Mrs. Nugent to carry out her plans, she had never been quite free of the pricks of conscience, of a lurking instinct that loyalty to her friend had not quite meant loyalty to her niece too. During the first few weeks of the engagement, while there seemed no doubt of Poppy's happiness with Arthur, she had been easy and comforted, but since Mrs. Arch's revelations, since the ball, since that morning's talk in the library, she had often felt like nothing better than a traitor, though telling herself all the time that she was acting for the best. It had been hard to speak to Arch, almost to tell her that she was mistaken, to hint broadly that another word on the subject would cause the deepest displeasure. Miss Frances, though not a very true Latimer, had a good deal of dignity of her own, but even that almost failed under the surprise, indignation, scorn, which was written on the face of the housekeeper.

"Very well, ma'am. I know my place," Mrs. Arch had said. "Not another word shall be spoken."

Arthur's return in so good a frame of mind, and the smoothness with which things were going now, had comforted Fanny a good deal. She was used to Arch's solemn face, which grew more gloomy every day that brought the wedding nearer. Poppy had noticed it too, of course, and laughed at it, saying that Arch could not bear an intruder in the family. Arthur had disliked Mrs. Arch very cordially from the beginning, and had made up his mind long ago that she must be got rid of. It would be impossible, he said to his mother, to have one's condemnation walking about the house for

ever. Mrs. Nugent smiled and told him to have a little patience. When he was once master of Bryans, all would be easy, all would be well.

Fanny Latimer on the old bench by the church door, absorbed in pitying herself for the past and dreaming of the rest of the future, hardly knew that the Rector had come back to her till she felt his gentle touch upon her shoulder. She rose silently and went out with him.

"Come this way," he said; and they crossed the road, turned into the field path that led to his house, and walked slowly down to the bridge, under the soft and silvery willows, up the path again into his garden, now gay with tulips and forget-me-nots, and sweet with lilies of the valley. The windows in his gabled house, shining from a green setting of leaves, seemed to smile their welcome to the graceful little lady who came with the Rector up his garden walk. These two sat down on a bench under a young oak, whose leaves rustled gently, yellow in the sunshine. On the other side of the valley the church clock struck four.

"I did not know it was so late," said Fanny restlessly. "How delightful it is here; how pretty your flowers are, Henry! But I must go home, you know."

"Why, my dear, you have nothing to do at home. I want to talk to you. Now that we have thoroughly arranged to-morrow"—he had gone into some final details as they crossed the field—"I want to know when my day is to be. Must we really wait till those young people have settled down?"

"Yes, I told you," said Fanny, a little wearily. "If you knew how tired I am! After to-morrow I shall go to sleep for a month. Then perhaps I may wake up and begin to think about you."

She said this, her eyes resting on the forget-me-nots. As he did not answer, she looked round at him, and saw the disappointment in his face. Had he not waited long enough? Was he to be played with for ever? Fanny smiled very sweetly and laid her hand on his. He bent over and kissed her; not even a bird was indiscreet enough to peep at these old lovers through the leaves.

Something in the earnestness of his gentle sentiment was irresistible.

"Dear," she said, "I give you my word, it shall not be longer than six weeks. I really have a great deal to think about, you know. But after to-morrow every-

thing will be easy, and perhaps I shall begin to realise that the rest of life is to be peace—with you—which I really cannot understand yet. You have been so clever, you have seen lately that I was worried—little you know what dreadful worry it has been. Sometimes in these last few months I have felt nearly wild, though just lately, since Arthur came home and seemed all right, I have been happier. But to bear all that without saying a word to Poppy, or even to you, and with poor old Arch looking daggers at me, and knowing that the village talked, and that all might go wrong in spite of everything—dear Henry, it has been a trying time, I assure you.”

As she talked, the Rector's smile died away, and his face was shadowed by a puzzled frown.

“But I did not know,” he said. “What do you mean about the village? What has it been talking about?”

“No, you didn't know. It was only foolishness, you see, and those things are so terribly exaggerated. Of course there was a good deal there ought not to have been, and I only wonder nothing came to your ears. At first I hardly knew whether to be sorry or glad that you knew nothing, because you are rather impulsive, and you might have insisted on saying something to Poppy, and then I don't know what would have happened. Not this wedding to-morrow, I'm afraid—and really now I see it would have been a pity, because Arthur was a good deal ashamed of himself, and Poppy is very fond of him, poor dear, and I dare say it will be all right in the end, as the girl is going to marry a steady sort of man. Of course the idea of the double wedding seemed to me impossible at first, but you see it was Poppy's wish, so I could not oppose it without some better reason than I really dared give. It is all over now, you know, Henry. Arch stopped the talk as far as she could; and, after all, though it was very wrong and foolish, there was not much to talk about.”

“It is not easy to understand you,” said the Rector with great gentleness. “You cannot possibly mean what you seem to say.”

“What do I seem to say? It really is rather difficult to explain.”

“Why, my dear, I make out from what you say that some village gossip has connected Arthur Nugent's name with some girl—can you possibly mean Miss Farrant?—that you knew it, that Arch

knew it, that you silenced the gossip and said nothing, and that it was not mere gossip, but true!”

“Exaggerated—very much exaggerated—it was indeed, Henry.”

He was silent for a moment or two. She lifted her eyes anxiously, half sorry now that she had not kept her troubles to herself a little longer. But he had been so kind, so sweet, and the little walk and the garden in this May sunshine so peaceful; it had seemed impossible to resist the longing that came over her to lay her burden down.

“Are you angry with me—was I so very wrong?” she murmured half playfully.

“Angry! no; but you cannot have done it,” he said with a quick touch of impatience. “But tell me more. When did this gossip reach you?”

“Oh, months ago, the very evening of the ball. Listen, and I will tell you everything, all I know, and then I think you will see that I could not have acted differently. Of course my first impulse was to tell Poppy, and you, and everybody else—but then I had so much to consider—and poor Laura Nugent!”

“Is not she capable of fighting her own battles?” said the Rector with a faint smile. “Go on, please. I might have known that your first impulse would be the right one.”

“Was it? Oh, no, I don't think it was. Well,” with a sigh, “to go back to that dreadful evening, Henry——”

And so at last, sitting under Mr. Cantillon's tree, while he listened in grave silence, Fanny Latimer told him everything.

His manner frightened her; but having once begun, she felt it impossible to stop, and at the bottom of her heart all the time there was relief mingled with fear. He said little, even when she had finished, and asked her very few questions, sitting thoughtfully with his head upon his hand. Once Fanny, looking at him, saw that his eyes were closed and his lips were moving, while he had turned very pale. Her own heart was beating painfully, and at that moment a terrible thought came to her—had she lost him, by what might seem to him her unpardonable silence? Was it a fault past forgiveness to have known all this, and yet to have allowed Poppy's engagement to go on? Poor little Fanny Latimer had not much bravado in her composition, if she had not much strength.

"Henry," she said, in a low, unhappy voice, "are you angry with me?"

For a minute or two he did not answer at all. Then he got up suddenly and gave himself a shake, as if to rouse himself from some bad dream. He walked away from her a few steps between the rows of tulips, and then came back and stood before her.

"My dear," he said, "you have allowed yourself to be made the tool of a worldly and unprincipled woman, and thus you have very nearly been the means of ruining four lives."

"Oh!"

"Of course you had a good motive; but do you now see the whole thing, Fanny, as clearly as I do? You were going to stand by and see Porphyria—our charge, yours and mine—married to a man—well, not fit to be spoken of among honourable men."

"Henry, you are too hard."

"I am not too hard. As for the other marriage—you were going to let a good man like Geoffrey Thorne, from a motive which I see clearly now, marry a girl so unworthy, so disloyal, as to carry on a flirtation with the man who is engaged to her friend. Was there ever a more horrible complication? And to please Mrs. Nugent, to avoid scandal, you have lent yourself to this. Do you realise what marriage is? Is not sin worse than scandal?"

Fanny bent her head. In spite of herself, tears were running down, and she could not bear that he should see them. But he did see them, and instantly coming back to his place beside her, he took both her hands in his and kissed her once again.

"My dear Fanny, you will always trust me in future," he said. "And let us thank Heaven that even this time you have not put it off till too late."

"But it is too late!" Fanny gasped in a sob.

"Do you really suppose that I shall read the Marriage Service for those four people to-morrow? How strange that I had presentiments! I have never been happy about either engagement."

"But Henry, dear," cried Miss Latimer in terror, "do listen to reason. It can't

be broken off now. It is too late, really. Do think of everything."

"That is difficult, with so few hours before me," said the Rector, faintly smiling. "But when it is a question of saving four lives, I don't know that one need so very cautiously look before and after. Come, let us go back to the Court. Five o'clock! Poppy will think I have run away with you."

Fanny, half bewildered, full of helpless, useless arguments, allowed herself to be led home. What Henry meant to do, and how he meant to do it, was almost beyond the reach of her rather limited imagination.

In all her happy years afterwards she will never forget that evening in May, with its shining beauty of perfect spring, the lengthening shadows in transparent air which gave a kind of youthful grace to the stiff lines of the Court, standing there upon its lawns, among its bright and varied trees. All the world of Bryans had seemed, an hour before, to be alive with preparation for a festival, and the future had shone out as clearly as the blue long vistas of Porphyria's park. Now, as Miss Latimer walked up bewildered to the terrace, her eyes and mind were oppressed by clouds of fog and mist, rolling in like a great unquiet sea. The strangely firm look in Henry Cantillon's face, as he hurried her along, did not make things much better.

"What can you do? What can you do?" she repeated continually.

Then they met Poppy face to face, coming across from the lawn. She was alone; and they saw at once that an extraordinary change had come over her too; for her lips were tightly set, and her grey eyes looked hard like stone. Mr. Cantillon at least was glad.

"Porphyria—my dear, may I speak—" he began, while Fanny Latimer stared breathlessly.

Poppy paused for an instant. She did not look at either of them, but it seemed as if she was trying to answer and could not. At last she said in a low, hoarse tone: "I know," and walked slowly away into the house, leaving them standing there.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VI

THERE are two diametrically opposed points of view from which London life is regarded by those who know of it only by hearsay—the one, from which life in the metropolis is contemplated with somewhat awe-struck and dubious eyes as necessarily involving a continuous vortex of society and dissipation; the other, which recognises no so-called society life except during the eight or ten weeks of high pressure known as the season. Both these points of view are essentially false. In no place is it possible to lead a more completely hermit-like life than in London; in no place is it possible to lead a simpler and more hard-working life. On the other hand, that feverish access of stir and movement which makes the months of May and June stand out and focus, so to speak, the attention of onlookers, is only an acceleration and accentuation of the life which is lived in certain strata of the London world for eight or nine months in the year. A large proportion of the intellectual work of the world is done in London; to be in society is a great assistance to the intellectual worker of to-day on his road to material prosperity; consequently a large section of "society" is of necessity in London from October to July; and, since people must have some occupation, even out of the season, social life, in a somewhat lower key indeed than the pitch of the season, goes on the same artificial foundations, goes on undisturbed, gathering about

it, as any institution will do, a crowd of that unattached host of idlers, male and female, whose movements are dictated solely by their own pleasure—or their own weariness.

It was the March of one of the last of the eighties. A wild March wind was taking the most radical liberties with the aristocratic neighbourhood of Grosvenor Place, racing and tearing and shrieking down the chimneys with a total absence of the respect due to wealth. If it could have got in at one in particular of the many drawing-room windows at which it rushed so vigorously, it might have swept round the room and out again with a whoop of amusement. For the room contained some twelve ladies of varying ages and demeanours, and, with perhaps one or two exceptions, each lady was talking at the top of her speed—which, in some cases, was very considerable—and of her voice—which as a rule was penetrating. Every speaker was apparently addressing the same elderly and placid lady, who sat comfortably back in an arm-chair, and made no attempt to listen to any one. Perhaps she recognized the futility of such a course.

The elderly and placid lady was the mistress of the very handsomely and fashionably furnished drawing-room and of the house to which it belonged. Her dress bore traces—so near to vanishing point that their actual presence had something a little ludicrous about it—of the last lingering stage of widow's mourning. Her name was Pomeroy, Mrs. Robert Pomeroy, and she was presiding over the ladies' committee for a charity bazaar.

Fashionable charities and their frequent concomitant, the fashionable bazaars, which have superseded the fashionable private

form of living rigidly up to what she considered their obligations. Laxity, frivolity of any kind, seemed to her to abrogate from the importance of her position. She ranged herself on the side of strict decorum and respectability, and became more precise than the precisians. Her husband at the same time developed talents latent in his obscurity, and became a prominent politician; and the ultra-correct and exclusive Lady Bracondale was now in truth a power in society.

Consequently, the tone in which she disposed of the intruder, who had ventured unauthorised to obtain recognition during her absence, was crushing and conclusive. But Mrs. Pomeroy's individuality was of too soft a consistency to allow of her being crushed; and she replied placidly, and with unconscious practicality.

"People do know her, dear Lady Bracondale," she said. "She had some friends among really nice people to begin with, and every one has called on her. I really don't know how it has happened, but it is years and years ago, you know, and she really is a delightful little woman. Quite wrapped up in her boy!"

Almost before the words were well uttered, before Lady Bracondale could translate into speech the aristocratic disapproval written stiffly on her face, the door was flung open, and the footman announced "Mrs. Romaine!"

CHAPTER VII.

EIGHTEEN years lay between the events which Lady Bracondale recalled so hazily and the Mrs. Romaine who crossed the threshold of Mrs. Pomeroy's drawing-room as the footman spoke her name. Those eighteen years had changed her at once curiously more and curiously less than the years between six-and-twenty and four-and-forty usually change a woman. She looked at the first glance very little older than she had done eighteen years ago; younger, indeed, than she had looked during those early days of her widowhood. Such changes as time had made in her appearance seemed mainly due to the immense difference in the styles of dress now obtaining. The dainty colouring, the cut of her frock, the pose of her bonnet, the arrangement of her hair, with its fluffy curls, all seemed to accentuate her prettiness and to bring out the youthfulness which a little woman without strongly marked features may keep for so long. The fluffy hair was a red-brown now, in-

stead of a pale yellow, and the change was becoming, although it helped greatly, though very subtly, to alter the character of her face. The outline of her features was perhaps a trifle sharper than it had been, and there were sundry lines about the mouth and eyes when it was in repose. But these were obliterated, as a rule, by a characteristic to which all the minor changes in her seemed to have more or less direct reference; a characteristic which seemed to make the very similarity between the woman of to-day and the woman of eighteen years before seem unreal; the singular brightness and vivacity of her expression. Her features were animated, eager, almost restless; her gestures and movements were alert and quick; her voice, as she spoke to an acquaintance here and there, as she moved up Mrs. Pomeroy's drawing-room, was brisk and laughing. Her dress and demeanour were the dress and demeanour of the day to the subtlest shade; she had been a typical woman of the world eighteen years before; she was a typical woman of the world now. But in the old days the personality of the woman had been dominated by and merged in the type. Now the type seemed to be penetrated by something from within, which was not to be wholly suppressed.

She came quickly down the long drawing-room, smiling and nodding as she came, and greeted Mrs. Pomeroy with a little exaggerated gesture of despair and apology.

"Have you really finished?" she cried. "Is everything settled? How shocking of me!" Then, as she shook hands with Mrs. Halse, she added, with a sweetness of tone which seemed to cover an underlying tendency which was not sweet: "However, we have such a host in our secretary that really one voice more or less makes very little difference."

"Well, really, I don't know that we have settled anything!" said Mrs. Pomeroy. "We have talked things over, you know. It is such a mistake to be in a hurry! Don't you think so?"

"I've not a doubt of it," was the answer, given with a laugh. "My dear Mrs. Pomeroy, I have been in a hurry for the last six weeks, and it's a frightful state of things. You've had a capital meeting, though. Why, I believe I am actually the only defaulter!"

The hard blue eyes were moving rapidly over the room as Mrs. Romaine spoke; there was an eager comprehensive glance in

them as though the survey taken was in some sense a survey of material or—at one instant—of a battle-ground; and it gave a certain unreality to their carelessness.

"The only defaulter. Yes," agreed Mrs. Pomeroy comfortably. "And now, Mrs. Romaine, you must let me introduce you to a new member of our committee; quite an acquisition! Why, where—oh!" and serenely oblivious of the stony stare with which Lady Bracondale, a few paces off, was regarding the opposite wall of the room just over the new-comer's bonnet, Mrs. Pomeroy, with her kind fat hand on Mrs. Romaine's arm, approached the exclusive acquisition. "Let me introduce Mrs. Romaine, dear Lady Bracondale!" she said with unimpaired placidity.

The stony stare was lowered an inch or two until it was about on a level with Mrs. Romaine's eyebrows, and Lady Bracondale bowed icily; but at the same moment Mrs. Romaine held out her hand with a graceful little exclamation of surprise. It was not genuine, though it sounded so; those keen, quick blue eyes had seen Lady Bracondale and recognised her in the course of their owner's progress up the room, and had observed her withdrawal of herself those two or three paces from Mrs. Pomeroy's vicinity; and it was as they rested for an instant only on her in their subsequent survey of the room that that subtle change suggestive of a sense of coming battle had come to them. They looked full into Lady Bracondale's face now with a smiling ease, which was just touched with a suggestion of pleasure in the meeting.

"I hardly know whether we require an introduction," said Mrs. Romaine; she spoke with cordiality which was just sufficiently careless to be thoroughly "good form." "It is so many years since we met, though, that perhaps our former acquaintanceship must be considered to have died a natural death. I am very pleased that it should have a resurrection!"

She finished with a little light laugh, and Lady Bracondale found, almost to her own surprise, that they were shaking hands. If she had been able to analyse cause and effect—which she was not—she would have known that it was that carelessness in Mrs. Romaine's manner that influenced her. A powerful prompter to a freezing demeanour is withdrawn when the other party is obviously insensible to cold.

"It is really too bad of me to be so

late!" continued Mrs. Romaine, proceeding to pass over their past acquaintance as a half forgotten recollection to which they were both indifferent, and taking up matters as they stood with the easy unconcern and casual conversationalism of a society woman. "At least it would be if my time was my own just now. But as a matter of fact my sole *raison d'être* for the moment is the getting ready of our little place for my boy. I ought to have shut myself up with carpenters and upholsterers until it was done! I assure you I can't even dine out without a guilty feeling that I ought to be seeing after something or other connected with chairs and tables!"

She finished with a laugh about which there was a touch of artificiality, as there had been about her tone as she alluded to her "boy." Perhaps the only thoroughly genuine point about her, at that moment, was a certain intent watchfulness, strongly repressed, in the eyes with which she met Lady Bracondale's gorgon-like stare; and something about the spirited pose of her head and the lines of her face, always recalling, vaguely and indefinitely, that idea of single combat. Lady Bracondale, however, was not a judge of artificiality, and Mrs. Romaine's manner, with its perfect assurance and careless assumption of a position and a footing in society, affected her in spite of herself. The stony stare relaxed perceptibly as she said, stiffly enough, but with condescending interest:

"You are expecting your son in town?"

"I am expecting him every day, I am delighted to say!" answered Mrs. Romaine, with a little conventional gush of superficial enthusiasm. "Really, you have no idea how forlorn I am without him! We are quite absurdly devoted to one another, as I often tell him, stupid fellow. But I always think—don't you?—that a man is much better out of the way during the agonies of furnishing, so I insisted on his making a little tour while I plunged into the fray. He was very anxious to help of course, dear fellow. But I told him frankly that he would be more hindrance than help, and packed him off—and made a great baby of myself when he was gone. Of course I have had to console myself by making our little place as perfect as possible, as a surprise for him! You know how these things grow. One little surprise after another comes into one's head, and one excuses oneself for

one's extravagance when it's for one's boy."

"Are you thinking of settling in London?" enquired Lady Bracondale.

She was unbending moment by moment in direct contradiction of her preconceived determination. Mrs. Romaine was so bright and so unconscious. She ran off her pretty little maternal platitudes with such careless confidence, that iciness on Lady Bracondale's part would have assumed a futile and even ridiculous appearance.

"Yes!" was the answer. "We are going to settle down a regular cosy couple. It has been our castle in the air all the time his education has been going on. He is to read for the bar, and I tell him that he will value a holiday more in another year or two, poor fellow. But I'm afraid I bore about him frightfully!" she added with another little laugh. "And it is rather hard on him, poor boy, for he really is not a bore! I think you will like him, Lady Bracondale. I remember young men always adored you!"

Lady Bracondale smiled, absolutely smiled, and said graciously—graciously for her, that is to say:

"You must bring him to see me! I should like to call upon you if you will give me your card."

Mrs. Romaine was in the act of complying—complying with smiling indifference, which was the very perfection of society manner—when Mrs. Pomeroy, evidently moved solely by the impetus of the excited group of ladies of which she was the serenely smiling centre, bore cheerfully down upon them.

"Perhaps we ought to vote about the fancy dress before we separate this afternoon," she suggested, "or shall we talk it over a little more at the next meeting? Perhaps that would be wiser. Mrs. Romaine——"

She looked invitingly at Mrs. Romaine as if for her opinion on the subject, and the invitation was responded to with that ever-ready little laugh.

"Oh, let us put it off until the next meeting," she said. "I am ashamed to say that I really must run away now. But at the next meeting I promise faithfully to be here at the beginning and stay until the very end."

Whereupon it became evident that the greater part of the committee was anxious to postpone the decision on the knotty point in question, and was conscious of

more or less pressing engagements. A general exodus ensued, Mrs. Halse alone remaining to expound her views to Mrs. Pomeroy all by herself and in a higher and more conclusive tone than before.

A neat little brougham was waiting for Mrs. Romaine. She gave the coachman the order "home" at first, and then paused and told him to go first to a famous cigar merchant's. She got into the carriage with a smiling gesture of farewell to Lady Bracondale, whose brougham passed her at the moment; but as she leant back against the cushions the smile died from her lips with singular suddenness. It left her face very intent, the eyes very bright and hard, the lips set and a little compressed. The lines about them and about her eyes showed out faintly under this new aspect of her face in spite of the eager satisfaction which was its dominant expression. The battle had evidently been fought and won and the victor was ready and braced for the next.

"That was excellent," she was saying to herself. "It couldn't have gone off better! She is very necessary, and she could have made things difficult. She meant to make things difficult! What an old cat she has grown, though!"

This last thought was a parenthesis, as it were, and had nothing to do with Mrs. Romaine's expression of countenance.

She got out at the cigar merchant's, and when she returned to her carriage there was that expression of elation about her which often attends the perpetration of a piece of extravagance. But as she was driven through the fading sunlight of the March afternoon towards Chelsea, her face settled once more into that intent reflection and satisfaction.

It was a narrow alip of a house at which she eventually got out, wedged in among much more imposing-looking mansions in the most fashionable part of Chelsea. But what it lacked in size it made up in brightness and general smartness. It had evidently been recently done up with all the latest improvements in paint, window-boxes, and fittings generally, and it presented a very attractive appearance indeed.

Mrs. Romaine let herself in with a latch-key, and went quickly across the prettily decorated hall into a room at the back of what was evidently the dining-room. She opened the door, and then stood still upon the threshold.

The light of the setting sun was stealing

in at the window, the lower half of which was filled in with Indian blinds; and as it fell in long alanting rays across the silent room, it seemed to emphasize and, at the same time, to soften and beautify an impression of waiting and of expectancy that seemed to emanate from everything that room contained. It was furnished—it was not large—as a compromise between a smoking-room and a study, and its every item, from the bookcases and the writing-table to the bronzes on the mantelpiece, was in the most approved and latest style, and of the very best kind. Every conceivable detail had evidently been thought out and attended to; the room was obviously absolutely complete and perfect—only on the writing-table something seemed lacking, and some brown paper parcels lay there waiting to be unfastened—and it had as obviously never been lived in. It was like a body without a soul.

The lingering light stole along the wall touching here and there those unused objects waiting, characterless, for that strange character which the personality of a man impresses always on the room in which he lives, and its last touch fell upon the face of the woman standing in the doorway. The artificiality of its expression was standing out in strong relief as if in half conscious, half instinctive struggle with something that lay behind, something which the aspect of that empty room had developed out of its previous intentness and excitement. With a little affected laugh, as though some one else had been present—or as though affectation were indeed second nature to her—Mrs. Romayne went up to the writing-table and began to undo the parcels lying there. They contained a very handsome set of fittings for a man's writing-table, and she arranged them in their places, clearing away the paper with scrupulous care, and with another little laugh.

"What a ridiculous woman!" she said half aloud, with just the intonation she had used in speaking to Lady Bracondale of her "little surprises" for "her boy." "And what a spoilt fellow!"

She turned away, went out of the room, with one backward glance as she closed the door, and upstairs to the drawing-room. She had just entered the room when a thought seemed to strike her.

"How utterly ridiculous!" she said to herself. "I quite forgot to notice whether there were any letters!"

She was just crossing the room to ring

for a servant when the front door bell rang vigorously and she stopped short. With a little exclamation of surprise she went to the door and stood there listening, that she might prepare herself beforehand for the possible visitor for whom she evidently had no desire. "How tiresome!" she said to herself. "Who is it, I wonder?" She heard the parlour-maid go down the hall and open the door.

"Mrs. Romayne at home!"

With a shock and convulsion, which only the wildest leap of the heart can produce, the listening face in the drawing-room doorway, with the conventional smile which might momentarily be called for just quivering on it, half in abeyance, half in evidence, was suddenly transformed. Every trace of artificiality fell away, blotted out utterly before the swift, involuntary flash of mother love and longing with which those hard blue eyes, those pretty, superficial little features were, in that instant, transfigured. The elaborately dressed figure caught at the door-post, as any homely drudge might have done; the woman of the world, startled out of—or into—herself, forgot the world.

"It's Julian!" the white, trembling lips murmured. "Julian!"

As she spoke the word, up the stairs two steps at a time, there dashed a tall, fair-haired young man who caught her in his arms with a delighted laugh—her own laugh, but with a boyish ring of sincerity in it.

"I've taken you by surprise, mother!" he cried. "You've never opened my telegram!"

SHORT STORIES—AND LONG.

SCRAPPY literature is one of the features of the day. Papers which consist of scraps—nothing but scraps—are becoming as the sands of the sea for multitude. Instead of half-hours with great authors people are trying half-minutes with little ones. Critics have been known to affirm that this class of periodical instead of educating debauches the public taste. Not long ago I heard an old literary hand maintain in argument that the habit of reading scrappy literature was like the habit of dram-drinking—when you had got into it you could not get out of it. He asserted that a man could read scraps until he became incapable of reading anything else; that, indeed, an

increasing number of men and women are so incapacitating themselves every day. For my part I doubt if literary taste is a thing either easily educated or debauched—if it is not a question rather of constitution than of anything else. To say that a man can get into the habit of reading any one thing until he becomes incapable of reading any other thing seems to me merely to talk at large. A man may read scrappy literature, and nothing but scrappy literature, say, for five years, perhaps—though one would think that that would be a record—but it is surely inconceivable to imagine that he would confine himself to that class of literature, say, for fifty.

Every question has two sides. If you consider, as to this question of scrappy literature, you will find that there is something to be said for and something to be said against it. It appears to me that the strongest indictment is not from the point of view of the public, but from the point of view of the author. The thing is spreading. Not our weekly papers only, but our monthly magazines are becoming things of shreds and patches. Brevity is not only the soul of wit, but with the modern editor it promises to become the all in all, the beginning and the end. The cry is: "Boil it down!" Not a bad process, perhaps, in itself. But to all things there is a limit. As regards this particular thing, one wonders where it is going to stop. We bid fair to keep on boiling down and boiling down until there is nothing left us but the lees. Take up a volume of either of the newest things in magazines—magazines which are avowedly devoted, first of all, to fiction. You will scarcely find a story in the whole of it—nothing but sketches. They may say what they please—and the air is full of sayings—about the art of writing a short story, but no man ever did live, or ever will live, who was, or who will be, capable of writing a good short story—a story as distinct from a sketch, or a study of character—in under three thousand five hundred words. Writers of fiction will tell you that they are continually in receipt of requests for a good short story under three thousand five hundred words. Anything longer promises to become a drug in the market. Talk about dancing in fetters! Comparatively, that is perfect ease.

The idea has come to us from the United States. Many people there—even some of the leading critics—appear to be under

the pleasing delusion that America has produced something new in literature at last—the short story. America certainly has done two things. It has made of the short story a sort of fetish, and—taken away the story. The American short story is everything except a story. As a rule it is charmingly written, but it tells no tale. This, instead of being considered a defect, seems to be considered a virtue. Authors have had their stories refused by conductors of high-class American periodicals—why do you suppose? Because, although excellent in all other respects, they contained too much incident. It is a fact. The American short story before all things must have no story. We, in England, have not yet got quite as far as that. We do not actually condemn incident. But we make our short stories such short stories that there is no room to introduce it.

Undoubtedly there is a demand for scrappiness in literature. Why should there not be? I see no reason why. One cannot too often insist upon the fact that we are men of many moods. What we desire to-day, we do not necessarily desire to-morrow. By all means let us have articles under one thousand words. Let us even have stories under three thousand five hundred. And, if we can, let us make them bright and entertaining—or sermons in a nutshell, if you choose. But men are like sheep. One man makes a success, other men immediately endeavour to make another, and a similar success, on exactly the same lines. Lacking capacity or courage to originate, they endeavour to make their imitation as servile as they safely can. The result of this characteristic of human nature is seen in the prevalence of the scrappy element in literature. People buy scrappy papers in such enormous quantities because there is practically little else for them to buy. One cannot but suspect that the thing is being overdone. Not improbably the next great fortune will be made by a periodical which will give no scraps, and no pictures, and nothing but lengthy articles and stories, and plenty of them. The man who first gives us the contents of two or three half-crown magazines for sixpence will make a fresh record in the way of enormous sales and world-wide popularity.

"Shilling shockers" have had something to do with the present rage for scrappiness. The sale of "Called Back" was a sort of

eye-opener to the world. Up to then publishers seem to have had no idea that money was to be made out of shilling novels. Many writers—especially the struggle-for-lifers—found the idea alluring. Raw hands imagined that it was easier to write a novel in one volume than in three. At any rate, it took less time, and required less paper. Publishers might be unwilling to risk their moneys on the larger venture, and yet be willing to take their chances on the less. So the stream of "shilling shockers" commenced to pour from the presses, which continues to flow, with scarcely diminished volume, to the present hour.

The would-be author is under a misapprehension if he supposes that it is easier to write a good novel in one volume than in three. To prove this you need only run through the heap of shilling novels which you will find on the first bookstall. You will find them hard reading, short though they are. Can one not count the good "shilling shockers" upon the fingers of one hand? Instead of being an easy thing, it is one of the most difficult things imaginable to write a good one-volume novel.

Consider the novels of the last century, what ponderous tomes they were. They seem to us to be interminable. We wonder how people ever found the time to read them. One explanation of the matter is, that then there was only one novel, where now, perhaps, there are a hundred. Fancy Richardson being paid so much per thousand words! How many words are there in "Clarissa Harlowe"? But granting that it is possible to make a novel too long, still it must be borne in mind that nine-tenths of the novels which have lived, and which will live, have had bulk as well as merit. Those novels of Thackeray's which, in the finite sense, not impossibly, will live for ever, are certainly not conspicuous for brevity. Take up a story by Charles Dickens; you hold something in your hand. Though, perhaps, it has not one line too many, "David Copperfield" is long. Wilkie Collins's novels were in no sense little ones. And how about Charles Reade? George Eliot's finest works—with the exception of "Silas Marner"—are her longest ones. Neither Charles Lever nor Anthony Trollope gave us scanty measure. You say that these writers are as extinct as the dodo! That is one of the fallacies which are current among those who do not know. Ask the

publishers; they will tell you that they would like to find some new writers who are as much alive. Two of the greatest financial successes have been made by two of the longest novels of the present generation—"John Inglesant" and "Robert Elsmere." The same thing is seen abroad. M. Zola's books are by no means short. M. Daudet's most popular books are his longest ones. Consider Gaboriau. Two French novels which have amused all the world, are of prodigious length—"Monte Cristo" and "Le Juif Errant." And which of Victor Hugo's novels is a short one? "Soll und Haben," the most popular of German novels, is anything but an unconsidered trifle. To go to Russia; "Anna Kaunina" is by no means a novelette. And, in Spain, how about the masterpiece of Don Miguel Cervantes?

Personally, I like a novel which has length. It must be a good one, as a matter of course. But, if it is a good one, I like it to be one at which I can cut and come again. One can read one of the modern productions in an hour, and forget it in half the time. The reason to me seems simple. The modern writer has no time to get into his stride; he is just beginning to feel at home when he, perforce, leaves off. I am not saying that no short stories have been written which leave an impression on the mind. I remember "Paul Ferrol," and the stories of Edgar Allan Poe. But people who can knock off little things like those are the curiosities of an age. The living masters of the art which is all the rage—the art of writing short stories and novelettes—seem to me to have only one sentence before their eyes, only one phrase in their minds—"Le style c'est l'homme." Take up a volume of short stories by an American writer; they abound. They are charmingly written, are they not? Take up a second; the writing is charming again. A third and fourth—nearly always is the writing charming. But have you got one striking, one original, idea out of any one, or out of all the lot? Has one single picture been precipitated on to the retina of your brain—a picture, the lines of which remain unblurred, and which you feel will be retained?

Take three or four what I venture to call stylists—say, W. D. Howells, Henry James, H. H. Boyesen, our own Robert Louis Stevenson. These men can write. There are pages of Howell's which, as regards music and rhythm, deserve to be

called exquisite. Henry James shows a nice appreciation of the meaning and value of words which is, in its way, unique. Boyesen's later writings are as smooth as velvet. They remind me of velvet as I read them—they are so refined, so soft; he evinces so delicate a sense of modulation. Stevenson's transparency, his clear-cut English, not one word too many, not one too few, is also in its way perfection. But—it is my unfortunate stupidity—the writings of these masters of style never seem to me to be alive. They are so anxious to keep the personal element out of their work that, like the sculptured Galatea, it lacks the miraculous thing—that miracle of miracles which we call life. I will say more. These gentlemen are best when they are shortest. When they are long they are tedious. The cause of this, again, is simple. Manner with them comes first; and only after manner, matter. I venture to affirm, and I fancy I could bring all the great masterpieces of prose fiction into evidence to prove it, that in prose fiction matter is of paramount importance. The story first of all, and then the manner—the words with which to tell it. If this is not so, if the matter, the story, is not of paramount importance, how comes it that all the greatest fictions—the fictions which are the common property of all the nations of the world—are as popular, and read almost as well, in translations as in the original? It is only the matter, the story, which can be translated. Who can adequately translate the manner, the style in which the thing first of all was told?

The men who in the present year of grace are posing as our teachers have it that the thing is all the other way. According to them, the tale is not the thing which is chiefly to be considered. The thing chiefly to be considered is the way in which the tale is told. They are unconscious, as it seems to me, of one great truth. That truth is this: The more one considers the masterpieces of fiction, the more certain it seems that the man who is capable of conceiving a fine story cannot help but tell it well. All the fine stories have been well told. When a man's whole being is permeated with the story that is in him it comes from him complete and perfect—a work of art in all its details. Reverse the process. Take a man who lacks capacity to conceive a fine story. What does he do? Some one has said that an individual steps lightly and

by accident upon the hem of a lady's skirt, and that Mr. Henry James required four hundred pages to tell us what came of it. The saying, although an exaggeration, does not lack truth. One is gradually driven to the conclusion that a stylist, a fictionist of the so-called new school is a person who entirely lacks a sense of proportion. He is so wholly devoid of the faculty of imagination, that when he does bring into the world even the most trivial incident, he cackles, and he cackles, until like the hen who has laid an egg, one begins to fear that he will never stop. To call these gentlemen realists, as some of them appear to call themselves, and to ask us to believe that they give us actual photographs of actual life is an absurdity. No avowed romancer ever dealt in more exaggeration. They make mountains out of mole-hills. Everything to them is an event. They appear incapable of conceiving a real event, so they are driven to the exaggeration of trivialities. A man can scarcely yawn without, according to these chroniclers of the very smallest of small bear, the event leaving an impress on his life. They remind me of nothing so much as those remarkable individuals in one of the plays of Molière—their affectations are so grotesque.

The world is changing before our eyes. Every day it is becoming more and more a world of miracles. And Mr. Howells tells us that all the tales are told! It is as though a blind man were to inform us that it is always night. He himself lacks the faculty to see, and he is incapable of realising that others may possess the power he lacks. Tragedies and comedies greet us on every side. No life was ever lived which did not have actual experience of both. Is a man to fill volumes with nothing but the records of puerile trivialities, and then to expect us to believe his assertion that he, and he alone, is a student of life? The thing is well enough once in a way. One may show literary dexterity upon those lines—the sort of dexterity which the conjurer shows who keeps six glass balls in the air for an hour at a time. But to persist in dealing with trivialities, and with nothing but trivialities, at the very least makes us doubtful if the person who does this thing could do anything else if he tried.

One would say nothing against writers who work upon these lines—for my part I hold that in the world of literature there is room for all things, and for all men!—

were it not that some of them go so much out of their way to attack the men who have worked, and who still are working, upon other lines. They are setting themselves up as apostles of a new revelation, one which shall be better than the old. There I, for one, join issue. It may be different—it may even be good in its way. But better? No! I hold that the masters of fiction stood in the light. We may discern faults in the work they did—what human work was ever faultless? There are men, plenty of them, who are pointing out faults in the work of Creation. But they stood in the light. They saw! Their vision was a broad one, their horizon wider than the average man's. I shall require stronger evidence than any which as yet has come my way before I shall be convinced that their work could easily be improved upon—ay, or their methods either.

There are those who tell us, both in England and America, that the short story is the highest form of literary expression; that length shows weakness; that the short story will be the fiction of the future. There I, again, join issue. With those who affirm that the lengthy novel is "played out," that readers are tired of it, that they care for it no more, one cannot argue. As has been said, these people meddle with matters of which they know nothing. The most popular novels of the past, and of the present, are long novels, just as certainly as the most popular novels of the future will be long ones too.

As for the short story being the highest form of literary expression, one consideration puts that claim out of court at once. Did you ever know a man or woman in twenty minutes, or even in a day? Did not the first impression often turn out to be the wrong one? A short story can only give us a glimpse of a man. The idea seems to be that there is a certain aspect of a man, of every man, which is the man; that it is possible to get a picture of certain moments of his life, which, to all intents and purposes, is a picture of his whole life. A person who really believes that to be the case cannot have lived, even in imagination. The wildest imaginings cannot conceive a more composite creature than a man. He is a bundle of contradictions—not merely of superficial, but of actual contradictions. No man ever knew another man. We do not know our-

selves. Those who tell us that outsiders know us better than we know ourselves talk nonsense. I can conceive of Omniscience knowing a man, in the sense of perfect knowledge. I can conceive it of nothing less than Omniscience. A man is not a consistent man, from the cradle to the grave. In the course of his one life he is several men.

Realise these facts, which are commonplace; remember that it is the business of fiction to present us with pictures of men; then say in what sense the short story can be the highest form of literary expression in fiction. The voice of the people is the voice of God—there is more truth in the saying than some of the wise are willing to admit. There is cause for the popularity of the lengthy novel. There is cause, even, for the popularity of the startling story in a couple of hundred weekly numbers. It introduces us to acquaintances with whom, before we have done with them, we have a chance of making friends. We, at any rate, come to know something of them, to have some real knowledge of the sort of life they lived. It is impossible to make a friend of a character who only figures in a story of some twelve or twenty pages. They come like shadows—if they even attain to the corporeality of shadows—like shadows they depart. It took the whole of "Vanity Fair" to make us acquainted with Becky Sharpe. Who can say that she could have been adequately presented to us in a shorter story? Let that person give us a Becky Sharpe, or any presentation of character, which shall hold the imagination of the world as Becky Sharpe has held it, and holds it still, and show us how the thing is done. How many of Thackeray's characters seem to us to be actual creatures of flesh and blood! Why? Because he wrote at length, never stinted himself as to space, and so was able to give us room and opportunities to look at them all round.

I am not suggesting that the short story is a form of literary expression which is not worthy of serious consideration. I repeat that in the world of literature there is room for all things and for all men. You can put matter for thought into twenty lines—if you have a knack that way. But no man ever did put, or ever will put, into a pint bottle a gallon of wine.

I believe that we do owe one lesson to the men who, in the United States, are preaching to the world the gospel of the short

story. We have learnt from them that the short story can be made a work of art. It is an error to suppose that America was the land of its genesis. The land of its development it most certainly is. We in England are apt to think very little of a story-teller till he produces a full-sized novel.

When Mr. Kipling's short stories first took the world by storm, sapient critics said, They are full of promise, let us wait and see, before we pronounce our final judgement, if that promise is fulfilled when he gives us the inevitable novel in the orthodox three volumes. I venture to affirm that they were not only full of budding promise, they were full of ripe performance. Mr. Kipling would be a great fictionist, although he had never given us anything but his short stories. In America they would have recognised this at once; indeed, they did. There they have writers, who, by general agreement, rank among their best, who have never written anything longer than stories in some five or six thousand words. And this, I would respectfully suggest to our English critics, is as it should be. For, if one considers the matter, it seems that one must concede that although, in the literature of fiction, the greatest work has not been done, and cannot be done upon small canvases—even the painters of miniatures can be artists, and, in the colloquial sense, immortal artists, too.

PATIENCE.

Be patient! Easy words to speak
While plenty fills the cup of life,
While health brings roses to the cheek,
And far removed are care and strife.

Falling so glibly from the tongue
Of those—I often think of this—
Whom suffering has never wrung,
Who scarcely know what patience is.

Be patient! when the sufferer lies
Prostrate beneath some fell disease,
And longs, through torturing agonies,
Only for one short hour of ease.

Be patient! when the weary brain
Is racked with thought and anxious care,
And troubles in an endless train
Seem almost more than it can bear.

To feel the torture of delay,
The agony of hope deferred;
To labour still from day to day,
The prize unwon, the prayer unheard:

And still to hope and strive and wait
The due reward of fortune's kiss;
This is to almost conquer fate,
This is to learn what patience is.

Despair not! though the clouds are dark,
And storm and danger veil the sky;
Let faith and courage guide thy barque,
The storm will pass, the port is nigh.

Be patient, and the tide will turn,
Shadows will flee before the sun;
These are the hopes that live and burn
To light us till our work is done.

"ALONG THE TRACK."

A WESTERN SKETCH.

It was in the late spring, about nine in the morning, and the work of the day was over; the boys had ridden off to the "up" pasture to work at the irrigation ditch, and would not be at home till supper-time. I was all alone in the shanty for the rest of the day, so I thought I would take a "tie pass" and walk along the railway track to E.'s ranch, about a couple of miles off by the line, but nearly seven if you rode across the prairie.

It was very rarely we walked, but that one day riding was out of the question for me; one of the horses was lame, so the boys had had to take Rorie with them, and I knew that if I wanted to go out I should have to tramp it, but anything was better than staying alone in the shanty all by myself. So I raked out and relaid the stove, filled the kettle, and put the potatoes and beef ready for frying; locked up the dairy and "dug out," for fear tramps should take a fancy to their contents; put the lamps ready for lighting, with a box of "tand-stickors" by the side; and having fortified myself for my walk with some milk and bread and meat—for we had breakfasted at six—I prepared to start. Of course, living as we did out on the prairie, I ought to have taken a six-shooter and a hunting-knife with me, but, as a matter of fact, my weapons were a thick leather strap and a walking-stick; the first being a protection against the barbed wire fences, and the second against rattlesnakes, the only two things that were at all likely to molest me on my travels.

Having made these little preparations, I pulled down all the blinds and locked the door of the shanty, our "not at home" signal out West, placed the doorway under a stone where the boys could find it did they come home first, saw that there was a tin dipper hanging by the well in case any thirsty soul came along, and took my departure.

By this time it was half-past nine, the sun was nearly vertical in the sky, and soon would be quite so. I should have a

hot walk, but I always loved the sun and could do with any amount of it.

Of course, too, in summer we wore very little clothing, the ever faithful Jaeger, a serge skirt, and a blouse comprising my costume, whilst a shady hat and pair of gauntlet gloves were all that were required for outdoor wear.

My road lay first along the creek, now in its best green dress, which a week or two later would be exchanged for a dusty grey. All under the cotton-wood trees, flowers carpeted the ground, flowers of all colours and of every shade of colour. Great glades of vivid blue larkspur, of the kind found in English cottage gardens, fiery spikes of a sort of salvia, golden globes of sunflowers, from tiny blossoms the size of a dollar, to heavy-headed flowers many inches across. Close to the ground clusters of pink daisies grew on one stem; hundreds of small yellow flowers in shape and foliage like violets were scattered about under the trees.

It was such a glare of colouring that it quite tired the eyes to look around, and I was glad to rest them on the green of the cotton-woods and willows, their leaves quivering in the sultry noontide heat, although there was not a breath of air; and on the clear stream purling along at the bottom of the creek, and making little waterfalls and cascades for itself over the many small rocks which had been brought down from the mountains on one of the numerous occasions on which the creek boomed.

The long western winter was only just over; indeed, any day even then we might have a vagrant snowstorm; but in this wonderful country it seemed to me the flowers blossomed underneath the snow, for no sooner does it melt than every inch of the prairie that is not sand is covered with colour. But, except high up upon the mountains, there is a great dearth of pure white flowers. Perhaps, after so many months of snow, Nature thinks we like a thorough change.

All the birds seemed to be on the twitter amongst the bushes, some even hopping about on the banks of the creek, and picking up a stray waterfly here and there for lunch; the bluebird, with its entire plumage of pale azure; the blackbird, with its handsome crimson wings; nay, sometimes, if you sit still by a lonely creek in late summer at midday, you may see that wonderful product of nature, the tiny humming-bird.

No song, however, such as we are accustomed to at home comes from any of them, only a cheerful twitter as they go about their daily business like sparrows in a suburban garden after a summer rain. But there is one bird, the brown sand-tit, that can talk.

This bird has his dwelling in the sand by the creek side, and sometimes I was startled, as I lounged half asleep against a cottonwood, by a plaintive voice close by calling "Maa-ry, Maa-ry." I would look round in astonishment; who could be calling me by name so many thousands of miles away from home and my own people?

Presently I would hear the cry repeated still more sadly, and feel that the mystery must at all risks be unravelled, and on looking round would see that it came from a demure, fat brown bird. That morning the sand-tit was very busy, making free with my name in the intervals of swallowing many of the brightly coloured insects that hovered over the water, and disputing the right of lunching off a plump sand-worm with a cheeky magpie.

I am not superstitious, but I looked instinctively about for another bird of the same species, remembering the old adage:

One for sorrow, two for mirth,
Three for a wedding, and four for a birth.

Presently I saw number two; he was close at hand, hidden away in a wild cherry-tree so full of bloom that the blossoms nearly trailed upon the top of the water.

It would surely be a fine fruit season that fall, for the plum-trees were already white, and the little, insignificant currant and gooseberry-trees were covered with flowers; and I fear my "Martha-like" mind travelled back to the shanty where, upon a top shelf, I had during the winter months accumulated several tin lard-pails, intended to contain cherry butter should the fates be propitious. The lard-pails naturally led my thoughts towards dinner, and I got up, for if I was to reach E.'s by noon it was high time I was on my way to the ranch; and I had not yet come to the track. There was no difficulty in crossing the creek; I hopped over it and up on to the other side, where our last bit of fenced-in pasture-land ended in a fire-guard and barbed wire fence. I kept a bright lookout over that pasture; it had a reputation for rattlesnakes, and I had no wish to tread upon or otherwise provoke the

creatures. However, I reached our fire-guard without seeing any.

A fire-guard sounds a very imposing thing, but it merely means about three feet of ploughed land on each side of the railway track, where the land has been settled up, ploughed by the ranchman to whom it belongs, and thus preventing the prairie-grass, which is always dry and parched, from being burnt to any great extent when it catches fire from the engine sparks, which happens very often.

Then came the barbed wire fencing, and there my strap was useful. I buckled the strands of wire closely together in the middle of two posts, and then, thanks to the strap, slipped safely under, for without it I should certainly have had my clothes torn off my back. As it was I did not escape altogether, for I rolled into a bed of prairie-louse—pardon the elegant name, I did not bestow it—and got up with my serge skirt covered with the tiny burrs of the plant; and I knew it would be months before I could brush them all out of the dress. But, I consoled myself, matters might certainly have been worse. I was now, at any rate, fairly on the track, and had taken my "tie pass," as it was called when you merely walked along for pleasure, although when you were tramping in search of work you were said to be "counting the ties."

It cannot be said that it was very pleasant walking along the track that hot May morning; it was rough and hummocky, and I frequently hit my toes against the ties, which was rather painful. Still, it was but the means to an end, and the quickest means at hand for getting to my journey's end. The track ran here through deep cuttings, there on a raised bank, and each time a train passed—and they ran pretty frequently on the Denver and Rio Grande—I had either to scramble up a cutting or down a bank to get out of the way; and as the said cutting or bank was usually composed of sand, you generally floundered helplessly about on it, and dreaded disturbing the festive rattlesnake, who loved the hot sand dearly, and also had a pleasing penchant for the warm iron rails on the line.

The vegetation along the railway was mostly of a dried up description, that is comparatively speaking, but not of the sage-bush and alkali style, as in some other states, where I have seen traps made for little birds and baited with water. Nor

was it altogether devoid of trees as in some parts of Iowa, where, I was told by a ranchman who had taken up land there, the children were kept continually at work twisting ropes of straw to replenish the stoves. The creek ran alongside the track here some little way, giving a trifling amount of shade, and even on the sand banks the coarser flowers flourished wildly. Some of the banks were, in fact, completely carpeted with flaming crimson and orange cacti; their thick, prickly leaves rendering stepping upon them anything but enjoyable, as their thorns would penetrate any boot.

In the autumn the blossoms give place to a small fruit, pear-shaped, and with rather a nice acid flavour, but I suffered agonies the first time I tasted them, the whole fruit being covered with minute prickles, too small to be seen by the naked eye; and not having been told this peculiarity, I bit vigorously into it, and it was weeks before I got the thorns out of my lips, tongue, and fingers; even now the memory of it is anything but pleasant, although the taste of the fruit itself reminded me of a tamarind. Here and there, amongst the cacti, grew huge clumps of the soap-weed, its tall, many-headed blossoms, each greeny-white blossom like an inverted Canterbury bell of the largest kind, hanging thickly together down the stalk, which was very often over four feet high, with bright green spiky leaves, that would cut your hand as with a knife, sticking out in all directions; whilst the Indian red lilies flourished everywhere, and the glossy green trails of the kilikinik ran riot all over the ground.

I had got quite a pretty bouquet together, when the cattle-horn of an advancing train was heard, and a Pullman train, with dining-car attached, came swiftly round the corner; and as anything female "counting the ties" is an anomaly out West, I found myself the observed of all beholders. I should think all in that train put their heads out of the windows and looked after me; I suppose I looked too highly respectable to be a tramp! I on my part regarded them in an equally interested fashion, and with, alas! perhaps a little envy.

The last car on that train was a dining one, and a very pretty girl in a most becoming hat was seated at one of the windows eating pink ice-cream; and I did want some of that ice-cream so! It seemed to me ages since I had even tasted such a

thing, and what a good time that girl must be having on the cars!

For I remembered gratefully my pleasant ride to Denver, and the many kindnesses I had received. There is no such country as America for a girl travelling alone. I would go fearlessly and happily from one end to another, sure, however wild the country might be, of the utmost kindness and consideration from all. But by this time the train had swept far away, leaving only a trail of fast-blackening cinders behind it, and I had come to a long bridge across the creek and cattle-guard, and much objected to walking over it. In fact, however often I might pass it, I never got used to the thing, and dreaded it much.

It was rather a length, for in making it due allowance had to be made for the stream; not only when it ran, a silver streak through its deep sandy banks in summer, but also when it boomed, a rushing brown torrent, flash and over the same banks at other times of the year. So the rails had to be carried over the bed of the creek at some height upon wooden trestles, the ties, as the sleepers were called, being laid across these at intervals of, say, a couple of feet, and the rails, in their turn, were laid upon the ties; so that in crossing these bridges, you had to step from tie to tie, and not be frightened at the depth below, or at the sight of the cottonwood trees waving at your feet. Fortunately, however, I had timed myself well, there would not be another train for a quarter of an hour, which would give me ample time to get across. So I set off bravely, although I never liked crossing that bridge, night or day, and longing to have something to hold on by, were it only a rope. I had got nearly to the end of it, looking steadfastly in front of me and never below, when, to my horror, I heard a cattle-horn sounding, and right ahead saw an engine coming at a great pace up the track. My heart nearly stood still, my feet did quite. But there was no time to be lost. I had forgotten that it was Thursday, and this was the pay engine and car taking the men's wages to them. There was no getting out of the way where I was, nothing for it but to go on as quickly as I could, unless I "flagged" the engine, and my pride would not allow me to do that, as with quickness and nerve there was plenty of time to get out of the way.

So I hurried on sharply, still with one eye upon the advancing engine;

noticing my bunch of flowers lodging upon the top of a cottonwood tree as they fell from my nerveless hand. But I saved the time, and sunk upon a sand-bank as the engine thundered over the bridge, which shook and swayed with the speed at which it was going. I shook also like the goose that I was, and then, I am ashamed to say, having the track all to myself, did a little "weep," and felt all the better for it; although I may say I made no mention of this slight fact on recounting my adventure to the boys in the evening. How thankful I was to stand on terra firma again! The rough earth and sand of the track seemed such delightful walking, I wondered I had ever been so ungrateful as to object to it; and I walked along happily, stopping at intervals to gather some of the young shoots of the wild hops for the boys' supper; for boiled and placed upon toast with melted butter they made a substitute for asparagus which was not unpleasing to the taste; and we none of us had sufficient time or water to plant a garden, so that anything in the way of green food was a treat. I also saw a rattler fast asleep in the middle of the track, but I was not going to disturb his slumbers, so gave him a wide berth, although from his size and the number of rattles on his tail he must have been an old one, and his rattle would have been a nice addition to my little store.

These brutes are very fond of the railway track, as the bright metal attracts a great deal of sun, and are often to be seen when you take a tie pass. Most people, in the interests of humanity, slay them promptly wherever found; not at all a difficult matter, as a single blow with a slight stick, if rightly given, is fatal; but I, in the interest of one small human being, preferred, when I could safely do so, not to trouble them, but to leave them respectfully alone.

By this time it was half-past eleven and fearfully hot, the rails were the colour of burnished copper in the sun, and I began to think of E.'s cool dairy and perhaps a slice of water-melon, with much satisfaction. Also I remembered that Thursday was mail day, and she always went into our little town in the morning, and would be sure to have brought our mail out with her. How one longs for letters out West, and how keenly some people have the knack of placing distant scenes and people vividly before you on

paper! Two of my home correspondents had this rare faculty; I was certain to hear from one or the other, perhaps both. And at the thought of possible letters I trotted on briskly until I caught sight of the shingled roof of E.'s shanty. This stood quite close to the track, closer than ours did, for there was a corn patch between our shanty and the rail. But theirs was rather a dangerous situation with regard to fire, the more so that the former owners of the ranch had accepted an indemnity of five hundred dollars once for all from the company, so that in the case of a fire E. and her husband could claim nothing.

But near the railway or not, I always felt my heart beat faster at the sight of that shanty, for in it dwelt the kindest neighbour and friend any girl could wish for. Not alone to myself but to all around that little woman stood as a sort of small Providence.

She had the heart of a lion in the frame of a mouse, and go when you would—at midnight, I verily believe—she would have a welcome for you, and if you were in any trouble the quickest and truest sympathy was added to it. When I reached the gate I gave a prolonged "Hoo-oo-oo," which was quickly answered by the appearance at the shanty door of a little figure in a blue calico gown, that trotted up to the gate to greet me, followed by the whole outfit of dogs.

For it was a peculiarity of this dear little thing that she never walked, not even in the house had she been known to do so, but ran from room to room, from table to cupboard, as if she could not leave you for long or feed you sufficiently.

It was always, certainly for me, and I think I may say for us both, a red-letter day when we met, and I was welcomed with delight, and told that dinner was just ready.

Dinner at E.'s was always a festival. No one knows the delight of sitting down to a meal you have not cooked or prepared until one has had the joy of providing three hundred and sixty-five dinners per annum, to say nothing of the same number of breakfasts and suppers.

Even the everlasting beef tasted nicer than it did at home, and I nearly finished a jar of sweet pickles, which were got out for my especial benefit. The meal was soon over and quickly cleared away; there were only our two selves and the Boss, the boys of the establishment being out with ours, working at the

irrigation ditch, which belonged jointly to three ranches, each having the use of the water two days a week, the Boss having first call on it.

So after dinner he rode off to look up the boys, and dear E., always mindful of others, called out to him to bring my boys back to supper as well. My eyes brightened at the idea. I should ride home in the waggon then, and not have to take a tie pass that afternoon!

"But we shall be so many," I represented, much against my secret wishes.

"And the more the merrier," she laughed. "There's a fresh ham in cut, and with that and the beef I guess we'll 'pan out' all right." Of course I was only too delighted, and as she went to get the letters she tossed a small pound package into my lap, and said: "Guess what that is! I can tell you, what with home letters and that, we will have a celebration this afternoon."

I pinched the little packet right and left.

"Rice, rolled oats!" I asked.

She shook her head.

"Smell it, child, smell it," and I did so.

"Oh, oh!" I cried with joy, "what a treat! It's tea, and not—not uncoloured Japan."

"English breakfast tea," she replied. "Yes, I know it's an extravagance, but for once in a way we will have a cup of afternoon tea just as if we were at home, and hang the expense! Here's the home mail!"

How we enjoyed that pot of tea; and how many cups we drank; and how we read and reread our letters, and then exchanged them, till I knew as much of a certain rectory in Sussex and the people in it as she did of my own home! And we had a lovely talk over them all that was yet a little tinged with melancholy.

For we seemed to hold our home-treasures on such uncertain tenure. The very letters lying in our laps were over three weeks old; and what might not have happened in a month?

But it would never do for the boys to return and find us dissolved in sentiment and tears; both men and women had to work in the States, and leave the weeping to take care of itself. There were the chickens to feed and shut up from the grip of the wily coyote, the fire to make up, and supper to lay. Then, as we knew the menfolk had had a hard day's

work and would be extra tired, we milked, and put some "chop" ready for the horses, then did up our hair, which, truth to tell, had got a little untidy whilst doing the chores, and were ready for the boys. It all seemed so easily done by the two of us. I often think that instead of ranching in solitary state English people should combine and live in small communities of, say, half-a-dozen families, sharing expenses and receipts. It would certainly be pleasanter for the men, and lighten the women's work considerably. It made it very hard lines when one felt ill, and yet had to keep about because there was only yourself to do things. I said something of the kind to E. But that astute little woman shook her head.

"All very well, Mollie, if they got on like we do; but suppose the petticoats took to quarrelling, and then there would be a nice kettle of fish in your small Arcadia! If life in community is ever to succeed with English people, allowance must be made for a certain amount of exclusiveness; and how are you to obtain that in a wooden shanty!"

I could not answer, and I suppose it would not be possible; but I wish some people would try it for a year, and give the world the benefit of their experience. Then every one could take, also, the work they were best suited to, and I would so have loved to only have had cooking and baking to attend to. I did hate washing and getting up starched things; indeed, I could never do them properly.

By the time E. and I had discussed our new Social Republic the two waggons had arrived, the Boss and Jack heading the procession on horseback.

In a moment the sleepy shanty awoke to life. We each of us cast a glance at the looking-glass—at least, I know I did, and I caught E. at it—to see if our hair was tidy, and then we ran out to meet the outfit.

They all seemed very jolly and ready for their supper, thankful also to find the chores done for them, and we sat down to supper with true Western appetites.

This was always the pleasantest hour of the twenty-four, the work was all done, and the night and its rest before us; after supper the boys helped wash up, and then we went into the parlour, where five pipes were soon in full blast, and E. and I listened and told of the day's doings. There was always something strange or funny to be told; life was full of surprises in this won-

derful new country with its Old World customs. A young country is usually a hopeful one, its faults very often virtues in their infancy, its wild intolerance even is a fault on the right side, for the universal tolerance which communities, like people, gain as they grow older, is sometimes only another name for universal indifference. Above all, this evening there was the home mail; and the papers and magazines, which were such a godsend, and which were lent over and over again all round the Creek. Then E. and I made arrangements to join the boys in the ditch for a picnic the next day, and then it was time to depart.

So we drove off at last; the waggon was guiltless of springs and I got a good jolting, particularly when we raced up and down the many "wash-outs" on the prairie road; but I did not mind them one little bit, being only too thankful to be spared taking a tie pass again that day.

PRISON POETRY.

HOWEVER much the bodily movements of men may be limited, and their freedom of action restricted by imprisonment, it but little affects the freedom of their mind. Adversity and confinement may for a time depress the mental faculties, but they cannot entirely deprive a genius of his power, or rob any man of his thinking capacity.

Nothing more strongly corroborates this fact than the innumerable outpourings, both prose and poetical, which have been produced by men and women during their days of imprisonment. The prolific productions of prisoners amply attest the truth of the poet's lines:

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.

On the subject of whether prisoners may be considered innocent we do not enlarge, but it is a fact, whether innocent or otherwise, "the mind is its own place," and never can be fettered but by narrow notions, bigotry, and prejudice.

It is not difficult to find an explanation for the production of so much prison literature. Not unfrequently the prisoner is left with nothing to occupy his attention but the fancies of his imagination, and the stern facts of his solitary surroundings. To minds which must think, such a condition is the very mine of ideas, for it is in solitude

that thought is born and nurtured. In this way, for lack of other occupation, many have been led, during their days of incarceration, to while away the time in writing down their thoughts. Some not privileged with the conveniences of paper, pens, and ink, have scratched upon their prison walls the ideas which rose before their minds and found expression in words. Who can tell, but for the solitude of the prison life of Bunyan, the world might never have possessed that most priceless of prison productions, the "Pilgrim's Progress."

Prison literature in general is too wide a subject to deal with in a short sketch such as the present; we shall therefore confine our remarks to "Prison Poetry."

Much of the matter which is classed under this category is certainly but little worthy of the title of poetry, being merely doggerel, and some of that the crudest possible, but the term is used in its general sense, including anything in the form of rhyme.

When Bunyan wrote his "Pilgrim's Progress" he penned for it a poetical preface, which we are quite justified in classing as a prison poem. It is usually found prefixed to the various editions of his work, and is called "The Author's Apology for His Book." In it he somewhat corroborates the sentiments already expressed, that, when writing is resorted to in prison, it is for lack of something other to do. He says:

I did not think
To show to all the world my pen and ink
In such a mode; I only thought to make
I knew not what; nor did I undertake
Thereby to please my neighbour; no, not I;
I did it my own self to gratify.

Queen Elizabeth, while undergoing imprisonment at the hands of her sister Mary, occupied much of her time in writing poetical pieces. The lines which she then wrote are judged to be far superior to any of her poems written at other times.

Mary Queen of Scots, in her imprisonment, penned much poetry of exceeding great beauty. Her "Last Prayer," which was originally written in Latin, possesses a particularly sweet, pathetic, and plaintive tone, which is most appropriate to the words:

Oh! my God and my Lord,
I have trusted in Thee;
Oh! Jesus, my Love,
Now liberate me.
In my enemies' power,
In affliction's sad hour,
I languish for Thee.

In sorrowing, weeping,
And bending the knee,
I adore and implore Thee
To liberate me!

James the First of Scotland was another Royal prisoner who whiled away the hours of his solitude by writing poetry. His poem, "The King's Quhair" (The King's Book) is one of the most widely known poetical productions of any sovereign. The original MS., which consists of nearly one thousand four hundred lines, is still carefully imprisoned among the many treasures of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Sir William Davenant, while imprisoned in the Isle of Wight in 1649, wrote the greater part of his now almost forgotten poem, "Gondibert." From the history of foreign countries many examples might be given of the poetical productions of prisoners. One of the most prominent is that of Silvio Pellico, the Italian litterateur, who wrote some of his finest pieces in the seclusion of his prison.

But all the prison poetry of which there is a record has not been pondered over and produced by such illustrious prisoners as those already named. Probably the mass of prison poetry which has been written on stools and bed-posts, and scratched on prison walls, far exceeds that which has found expression on paper, and many a "mute, inglorious Milton" has begun and finished his poetical career with these "lost to sight" productions.

There is in existence a short poem, said to have been scratched by a maniac on the wall of his cell, which runs thus:

Could I with ink the ocean fill,
Were all the world of parchment made,
Were every reed on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God alone
Would drain that ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky.

The authenticity of this being the work of a maniac has often been questioned, because of the beauty of its expression and its sound reason, but the story stands.

As might be expected the effusions of gaol and penitentiary prisoners are of a much more humorous tendency than the foregoing. However, even in gaol may be found, here and there, in out-of-the-way places, snatches of poetry not entirely void of pathos and sometimes power. There must have been something of the moralist in the prisoner who wrote the lines:

Vain regrets did never yet amend
Our past offences.
Who wrongly acts must face the facts,
And bear the consequences.

In the "Prison Diary" of Michael Davitt we find a record of his discovery of a poetical effusion, inscribed on the bottom of a dinner-pail, which runs thus :

Millbank for thick shins
And graft at the pump ;
Broadmoor for all laggas
As go off their chump ;
Brixton for good toke and
Cocoa with fat ;
Dartmoor for bad grub, but
Plenty of chat ;
Portsmouth, a blooming
Bad place for hard work ;
Chatham on Sunday gives
Four ounces of pork ;
Portland is worst of the lot
For to joke in ;
For fetching a lagging
There's no place like Woking.

To one unacquainted with the prison vocabulary, in this instance a glossary would be of decided advantage. Some one, evidently with a personal knowledge of the ways of prison life and language, has realised this necessity, and has supplied the meaning of some of the most obscure phrases as follows :

"Thick shins" means good food ;
"graft at the pump," work at the cranks, sometimes called "grinding the wind" ; a
"lagg" is one who is not in penitentiary in contradistinction to one who is sent to the House of Detention ; "toke" is bread ; "fetching a lagging" means having an easy time of it ; "Woking" is the "sick prison." Not unfrequently the subject on which the muse delights to inspire the imprisoned "poet" is the "grub," which accordingly receives varied treatment at his hands. For instance :

I had for my dinner, oohone, oohone,
One ounce of mutton and three ounce of bone.

One more month then out we go,
Then for feed of hot coco,
Fried bread and stick, plenty of beer,
Better luck than we get here.

Cheer up, boys, down with sorrow,
Beef to-day, soup to-morrow.

To the prisoner, prison life must in itself contain little that is poetical, and yet if he possesses that spirit of finding "sermons in stones," he will be able to impart even to such prosaic life, "Thoughts which do lie too deep for tears."

This power is beautifully displayed in the case of Sir Roger L'Estrange, who lay in prison for nearly four years, for espousing the Royalist cause during the Civil War. While in prison he wrote a poem entitled, "The History of the Imprisoned Royalists." In it these verses occur, which exhibit the freedom of mind he possessed, and the

power of making things poetical even in prison :

That which the world miscalls a gaol
A private closet is to me,
Whilst a good conscience is my bail,
And innocence my liberty.
Locks, bars, walls, leanness, though together
met,

Make me no prisoner, but an anchoret.

My soul is free as ambient air,
Although my baser parts be mewed ;
Whilst loyal thoughts do still repair
To company my solitude ;
And though rebellion may my body bind,
My King can only captivate my mind.

Have you not seen the nightingale,
A pilgrim cooped into a cage,
And heard her tell her wonted tale
In that her narrow hermitage ?
Even then her charming melody doth prove
That all her bars are trees, her cage a grove.

I am the bird whom they combine
Thus to deprive of liberty ;
But though they do my corpse confine,
Yet, maugre hate, my soul is free ;
And though I'm mewed, yet I can chirp and
sing
Disgrace to rebels, glory to my King !

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alecia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXXV. AT THE LAST MOMENT.

ARTHUR and Poppy, when their elders left them alone that afternoon in the garden, did not at first find much to say to each other. For some time they sat in the shade of the old cedar, hardly speaking. Arthur seemed to be lost in thought, while a kind of shyness had fallen over Poppy ; with drooping eyelashes she gazed across the shadowed grass, and a very slight but happy smile just curled her lips, giving her whole expression a sweetness which it sometimes wanted.

"What are you thinking of, dear?" said Arthur suddenly.

She lifted her head and their eyes met. The look that he gave her was perhaps a curious one. The eyes of Poppy's lover, who was to marry her the next day, expressed admiration, kindness, a certain interest, a certain content, a little excitement, a little self-pity and resignation. Poppy could not read all this ; such a variety of silent speech would have been beyond her, even if she had been clever in interpreting looks. She only understood the kindness and the admiration ; the rest was a blank ; but for the first time since she had known Arthur,

she was aware of that blank. Not that she told herself so; the feeling that unconsciously chilled the air and spoiled her smile was of the vaguest, most instinctive kind. What caused it? In another moment she knew. Love had looked at her from other eyes, and henceforth no imitation could pass muster. Poor Geoffrey's look had haunted her all through these months, and now it returned to her so vividly that under Arthur's gentle glance her eyes fell, and the colour mounted in her pale face. Arthur, of course, only partly understood her. He knew she loved him, and he never thought that it could possibly occur to her, this simple-minded, devoted woman, to be at all dissatisfied with what she had in return.

"Poppy, I'm not good enough for you," he said, half in play. "Tell me, what are you thinking about? Why do you look like that, dear?"

"We belong to each other," she said, very low. She was answering herself rather than Arthur, and did not really know what she meant by the words. "Just now I was thinking of Saint Carolus—and——"

"Sitting under a fir-tree? Poppy, are you sure you don't regret it?" he said, smiling and dropping his eyes.

"Regret it? How could I?"

"Well, dear—you might, you know."

"Do you, Arthur?"

"What silly questions! Give me your hand."

He took it in his own, leaning forward to look at it, so that her eyes rested on his fair, bent head, white brow, and sleepy eyelids lowered. She said in the depths of her heart:

"Men are not all alike. Arthur is a perfect kind of man—civilised. Men like him don't show all they feel." She looked at her hand as it lay in his, thinking: "Yes, it is at home in its right place—happy thing!" and the smile that had fled came back to her. She wished a little that Arthur would kiss her, but he seemed quite contented to sit there looking at her hand.

"I suppose you know, Poppy, that you have the prettiest hands in the world?" he said presently.

There was no dishonesty in this, for in truth he only spoke what would have been most people's opinion. Poppy's hands were long, narrow, white, and delicate; the fingers long and inclined to be pointed,

but yet not tapering to weakness, as the fingers of women of her kind often do. They were not clever or capable hands, but they were not without character; and a little more of that would have made them less pretty.

Arthur held the hand and admired it. He really admired it, as he admired Poppy herself, and all her characteristics. But a comparison existed in his mind. With eyes bent down and gentle touch, he might have been a polite acquaintance studying the shape, the lines, the soft tints of what he was allowed to hold. He was thinking of another hand, smaller, shorter, squarer, browner, yet delicate in its own way; a hand which had no ancestors to boast of, but possessed capacities of its own, and a kind of character quite outside the sphere of old English breeding. Some men might have been led by one type, some by the other.

It was really too startling that Poppy, after a few minutes of this gentle philandering, said suddenly:

"Arthur, before Aunt Fan comes back, would you very much mind going with me to Church Corner?"

For a moment Arthur did not look up or reply. It seemed really almost hard that his good resolutions should be tried in this way. It would be bad enough, he knew, to see Maggie in church the next day, each of them being married to somebody else; but then he would be so well guarded from himself that no mischief could come of it. Perhaps, even to-day, there could not be much danger. In Poppy's presence they could hardly even look at each other, much less speak freely. He had given his word to his mother, and he quite meant to keep it; yet at Poppy's words there surged up in his heart an irresistible wish to see Maggie again, even to be in the same room with her for ten minutes. Perhaps she had forgotten him, and made herself contented with that dull fellow she had promised to marry. It would be interesting to know. Arthur told himself he only wished—feeling like a rather heroic victim of circumstances—that he could have managed as easily to forget her.

He made one small effort in what seemed to be the right direction.

"Must we?" he murmured. "It is so awfully jolly here!"

The light flashed up in his brown eyes as he raised them once more to Poppy's face; she thought it was for her, and

smiled happily as she drew away her hand.

"Yes—but I don't want to feel unkind," she said. "They say that the old man can't live very long, and—don't you understand, dear?—I would rather not go away without seeing him again. And Maggie—poor child——"

"Why do you pity her?" Arthur said, looking down.

"Oh, I don't know—yes, I do. I don't think she is quite as happy as I am."

"It is so difficult to know about that, isn't it?" he said softly. "Anyhow, Thorne is a good fellow—a better man than I am, Poppy."

She made no answer in words, but laid her hand on his again with a quick, caressing touch. He caught it and raised it to his lips.

"Poppy," he said, "I tell you again, you are fifty thousand times too good for me."

"Nonsense!" she said. Then she rose up, saying: "Come!" and it seemed that he could only obey.

They strolled slowly down the lawn, through the bright budding wood, and out into the green lane beyond. Arthur had soon hardened himself to the inevitable, and now he talked lightly and cheerfully. They were both laughing, and he lingered a moment over the fastening of the wood gate, when footsteps came hurrying up the lane, and a man dashed past them, hurriedly taking off his hat as he went. He was gone so quickly that Poppy hardly saw him, but Arthur, who faced him, had met a glance from dark, angry eyes which made him colour and frown.

"Was it Mr. Thorne?" said Poppy, bewildered.

"Yes. Did you see his face?" said Arthur with a slight laugh. "He looked more like murder than marriage. I hope he won't shoot anybody in church to-morrow—me, for instance."

"Why should he shoot you?" Poppy exclaimed; and then she stopped, flushing painfully.

Arthur laughed again; he was too conscious of his own false step to notice hers.

"He looked as if he might be fresh from a quarrel—rather angry with any one who happened to be in a better temper than himself."

"A quarrel! I hope not," Poppy said faintly. "And yet if—if they don't care enough for each other—as I have feared

sometimes—it would be better to find it out now than next week."

"Why, it would be too late now. Fancy breaking off your engagement not twenty-four hours before your marriage! Not possible."

"Oh, yes, quite possible. Much better than to marry and then be unhappy for ever."

"But don't you think it would be dishonourable?"

He was staring at her in a kind of astonishment.

"Dishonourable!" she repeated.

"Yes, dear, dishonourable. Most people would think it so. You yourself would never treat a man so."

"I! Oh, of course not. One doesn't think of one's self. No doubt you are right. Only if two people find out their mistake just in time, are they really bound to it for ever!"

"Two people are so seldom convinced in the same way," said Arthur slowly.

"Such a breaking-off nearly always means an awful upset for one or the other. Seriously, though, about these—about her and Thorne—do you think they——"

"I have no reason," Poppy said decidedly. "I dare say it is all right; something may have annoyed Mr. Thorne. Please ring the bell."

To her surprise, the maid said that Mr. Farrant was downstairs, and took them straight into the south parlour, where in a flood of sunshine, almost extinguishing a small yellow fire, the old man sat in his usual chair. His beard and hair looked wild; he seemed restless and strange, and his speech was a good deal affected, so that Arthur could hardly understand the hurried words with which he received them. Poppy, knowing him better, was a good deal touched by a welcome which seemed quite to ignore any change or coldness in the last few months. She made out that he was glad to see her once more as Miss Latimer, glad to see Captain Nugent, glad that in their happiness they had remembered a poor failing old man. He was, in fact, ready to take a bright view of everything. He began reminding her of a talk they had had in the autumn, when he first suggested to her that Maggie might marry Geoffrey Thorne. He did not remind her of his unkind words about Arthur on the same occasion—perhaps he had forgotten them.

"And by this time to-morrow it will be all over, all over," he repeated several times.

"And he is a good fellow, Miss Latimer. I'm ready to trust him with my little girl. He's going to take her away for a fortnight, you know—we can't afford wedding trips like some people—and Miss Thorne is going to look after me. She's a good soul, though, to tell you the truth, she frightens the young men out of their senses. But they're mistaken; she would make a better wife than two-thirds of these girls you see about. Well, Maggie will have a change, and she wants it. She is not looking well, Miss Latimer. I wish she could have been married before, but it was put off to please you, I understand."

Poppy listened patiently to these and further wanderings. At last she managed to say: "Where is Maggie, Mr. Farrant?"

"Maggie is in the garden with her young man," he answered. "She has been gone a long time—too long, too long. Captain Nugent, will you oblige me by stepping through that window? You will find Maggie, and bring her in to see Miss Latimer."

Arthur hesitated. But he and Poppy both knew that Geoffrey Thorne was no longer there; and thus Poppy, at least, saw no reason why he should not obey the old man's wish. One of Mr. Farrant's thin hands was nervously stretching towards Poppy, and his eager eyes were fixed upon her. Strangely enough she had a feeling that she would never see him again, and that he wished for a few words alone with her. She made Arthur a sign with her head. He rose, still looking at her with doubtful eyes; but it seemed that fate was driving him. He slowly crossed the room, let himself out of the window, went down the steps, down the long strip of lawn, and disappeared among the trees in the lower part of the garden.

In obedience to the old man's eager signs, Poppy drew her chair nearer to him, and with distracted ears, in her anxiety about Maggie, found herself listening to the particulars of his will, as well as of the settlement he had made on Maggie. He had arranged all that with Geoffrey's father—"a sharp man, my dear," he chuckled, "a good man of business, I can tell you; but we understand each other, and you may take my word for it, the arrangements are as fair as we knew how to make 'em. Have you seen Maggie's wedding-dress? How much do you think it cost, now?"

Thus the minutes rolled on, all too short for the old man and his confidences, but

very long and slow for the fair young woman who sat beside him with one hand on the arm of his chair, trying to listen, trying to answer, with all the loyal courtesy that belonged to her, yet watching the window and the garden with a puzzled uneasiness that deepened with every ticking stroke of the old clock in the corner.

Arthur, going quietly down among the trees, had soon found Maggie. She was sitting on a grass bank, her face hidden, sobbing and crying despairingly, as if all the grief in the world was hers. He walked so lightly on the grass that she did not hear him coming, and she did not know that he was there till he knelt suddenly down beside her, forgetting everything else in the world, and gently drew away the hands that were hiding her tearful eyes. Maggie gave a little start and cry, but escape, even if she had wished it, was out of the question, and the next instant her dark curly head was lying on his shoulder. The birds sang happily, and the soft May wind rustled the trees, while Arthur comforted her.

At the end of half an hour he came back to Mr. Farrant and Poppy, very pale, his eyes shining, and with a strangeness, almost solemnity, in his manner, which filled Poppy with an extraordinary new terror of she knew not what. He gave her no choice as to what she was to do. He walked straight up to the old man and held out his hand.

"Well, sir, where's my little girl?" said Mr. Farrant, staring at him.

"She is not to be found, sir," Arthur answered calmly. "She will be in by-and-by, no doubt. Shall we go?" he said to Poppy.

Somehow his manner paralysed her, and she could only follow his lead.

"What is it, Arthur? You must tell me," she whispered, as soon as they had escaped into the passage. "You did find her, I'm sure. Is she ill? Is she dead? I must go to her."

"No, you must not," he said. "She is neither ill nor dead. Come home now with me. There is something I must tell you."

Even then there flowed over Poppy the first wave of a new, indescribable feeling, utterly unknown to her single-minded nature—the feeling of living in a world of mere phantoms, mere appearances, with

nothing real, with no such thing as a consistent human character. For this man who walked beside her up the lane and through the wood was not Arthur Nugent, the man she knew so well, the man she loved and was to marry to-morrow. It was somebody quite hard and strong, his will roused to such violent life that she instinctively felt it to be irrealisable, and dared not even—Poppy, with all her own stately independence—break the silence which he chose to keep till he was ready to speak to her.

She went with this strange man—Arthur with some other man's fierceness and strength instead of his own pleasant and easy gentleness—walking as if in a dream, through the familiar paths, led by him where he chose to go, till they came out of the wood at the corner nearest the garden.

Not far up the lawn there was a lonely seat, half in the hollow of an old tree, which had been struck by lightning years ago, but was now clothed with ivy and honeysuckle. They were trained to make a kind of little arbour, and Poppy used to play there when she was a child. Now tree and arbour and all are gone; they were cleared away by Miss Latimer's orders in the autumn of that year, much to the surprise of the gardener.

If Arthur wished to escape interruption he could not have chosen a better place; for it was out of sight of the windows, no path passed near, and the view was of green slopes of lawn shelving away into the outskirts of the wood. Poppy sat down and looked at him; she could not have walked much farther, for her bodily and mental powers seemed alike to be failing in this extraordinary suspense. He stood in front of her, looking on the ground. After the strained silence had lasted a minute longer, he said abruptly:

"There is something I must lay before you—and you must decide."

Was this her lover? She stretched out both her hands to him in a first and last appeal. Her eyes were more eloquent than her lips, which could hardly pronounce his name; but he did not—perhaps he dared not—look at her.

"It is a queer thing that you should have said that," he went on in a low, sullen tone, as if he was repeating a lesson; "I mean that about breaking off at the last moment. Do you remember? You said that it was better than to marry and then be unhappy for ever."

"Has Maggie——?" Poppy murmured, almost conscious of a feeling of relief.

But no! if Maggie had jilted Geoffrey Thorne, what was it to Arthur that she should be told in this fashion? And what was he saying now?

"I am bound to you. I don't deny it. I am in your hands. But if you marry me it shall be with your eyes open. That is only fair to you, especially after what you said. I don't want to excuse myself in any way—though perhaps I might, if you knew all. I came down here engaged to you. I won't say much about our engagement. But it is the truth that you and I were both dragged into it by our relations. I don't mean quite unwillingly——"

Poppy made a slight movement. Arthur lifted his eyes and met a look that brought him partly to his senses. He blushed to the roots of his hair.

"I'm honest with you at last," he went on after an awful pause. "I must tell you all. We have cared for each other—she and I—ever since we first met. When she accepted that fellow, the poor child thought it was the best thing to do—had some notion of being safe, I suppose. Unfortunately people got to know about it; and you can imagine that my mother bullied me. It was because of that, more than my health, that she took me off to the south. But I need not go on explaining; your aunt can tell you all. Now do you see we are in your hands? She almost told that man to-day she would not marry him. And in any case she won't. But you must decide for me."

Poppy leaned back in a corner of the seat. Her heart was beating heavily, and her brain seemed to swim. She heard all that Arthur said, and understood it in a way; but the things heaped upon her seemed almost too much to be borne all at once. People had known—her aunt had known—every one but herself had known. Yet they were all rejoicing at her marriage with this man. It was not only the ideal Arthur who had disappeared, but among her friends and relations faithfulness did not exist. Death could not be worse than such an experience, Poppy dimly thought as she sat there. Pale, grave, statue-like, her thick lashes lowered, she had not a look or a word for Arthur; and as he stood before her, his shadow lay between her and all the world. What a shipwreck! what months of deception—not only self-

deception, but a long fraud practised by all who were near to her!

Arthur saw that the shock was very great, and he was unfeignedly sorry, for his admiration and liking for Poppy were real. Still a good deal of impatience was mixed with his sorrow, for he was thinking more of Maggie than of her, and half his brain was busily occupied in planning the future. As for his own unfortunate part in the business, he laid all that at his mother's door. She had forced him into this engagement, she had pressed on the marriage in spite of everything, and she would have no right to be surprised if he ended in what she would think ruin. He felt that he was cutting a most deplorable figure, that his present course was almost as dishonourable as if he had run away with Maggie from her grandfather's garden without a word to anybody. However, in his present state of mind, he was quite willing to be cut by the whole world for Maggie's sake. He was over head and ears in love, and poor Poppy was only an obstacle. He was so much in love that, though a tolerably worldly young man, he had not one thought or regret to spare for the fortune, the position, the beautiful old Court, all that at this last moment he was so resolutely leaving behind him.

"Please answer me!" he said, after a few minutes, clenching his two hands with impatience.

It seemed to him that there was nothing more to be said, and that even to ask Poppy's forgiveness would almost be insulting her. It was still more impossible to express the grief he really felt, and therefore, the sooner this painful interview was ended, the better for them both.

"What?" Poppy murmured vaguely.

He came a step nearer, setting his teeth; the strain was almost unbearable.

"Don't you understand? Do you still wish to—to go through this ceremony to-morrow? If you do, of course I am at your service. If not, will you set me free from my engagement?"

His bright, impatient eyes were fixed upon her; the tone of his voice sounded almost brutal in her ears. He could not, certainly, have put his question more baldly; and it had its effect; it roused Poppy as the touch of hot iron or the prick of a dagger might have done. Her pale face flamed with colour suddenly, and her soft eyes flashed fire; he had never seen them so beautiful before. His own fell before them; and however exalted by thoughts of Maggie, he felt at that moment rather like a beaten dog.

She was standing up now; he was conscious that she had taken his ring from her finger, and thrown it on the grass at his feet. Then she moved a few steps away; then turned half round and said to him over her shoulder:

"You are free. You have done right—I am obliged to you."

It was the tone and air of a princess speaking to the most degraded of men; but it did not make Arthur angry. As she walked away he even followed her a few steps, muttering, "Poppy, forgive me." But she did not turn, or look, or answer; and he stood still in the shadow, gazing after her as she went, till she was hidden by an advancing line of trees.

Arthur picked up the discarded ring, drew a long breath, and muttering "That's over!" started off in a great hurry down the lawn and through the friendly shades of the wood.

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CHARLES DICKENS.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. ROMAYNE had been left, eighteen years before, absolutely penniless. When Dennis Falconer took her back from Nice to her uncle's home in London, she had returned to that house wholly dependent, for herself and for her little five-year-old boy, on the generosity she would meet with there. Fortunately old Mr. Falconer was a rich man. There had been a good deal of money in the Falconer family, and as its representatives decreased in number, that money had collected itself in the hands of the few survivors.

A long nervous illness, slight enough in itself, but begetting considerable restlessness and irritability, had followed on her return to London; so natural, her tender-hearted cousin and uncle had said, though, as a matter of fact, such an illness was anything but natural in such a woman as Mrs. Romaine, and anything but consistent with her demeanour during the early days of her widowhood. Partly by the advice of the doctor, partly by reason of the sense, unexpressed but shared by all concerned, that London was by no means a desirable residence for the widow of William Romaine, old Mr. Falconer and his daughter left their quiet London home and went abroad with her. No definite period was talked of for their return to England, and they settled down in a charming little house near the Lake of Geneva.

In the same house, when Julian

was seven years old, Frances Falconer died. Her death was comparatively sudden, and the blow broke her father's heart. From that time forward his only close interests in life were Mrs. Romaine and her boy. The vague expectation of a return to London at some future time faded out altogether. Mr. Falconer's only desire was to please his niece, and she, with the same tendency towards seclusion which had dictated their first choice of a Continental home, suggested a little place near Heidelberg. Here they lived for five years more, and then Mr. Falconer also died, leaving the bulk of his property to Mrs. Romaine. The remainder was to go to Dennis Falconer; to his only other near relation, William Romaine's little son, he left no money.

So seven years after her husband's death Mrs. Romaine was a rich woman again; rich and independent as she had never been before, and practically alone in the world with her son. In her relations with her son, those seven years had brought about a curious alteration or development.

The dawnings of this change had been observed by Frances Falconer during the early months of Mrs. Romaine's widowhood. She had spoken to her father with tears in her eyes of her belief that her cousin was turning for consolation to her child. Blindly attached to her cousin, she had never acknowledged her previous easy indifference as a mother. She stood by while the first place in little Julian's easy affections was gradually won away from herself not only without a thought of resentment, but without any capacity for the criticism of Mrs. Romaine's demeanour in her new capacity as a devoted mother. To her that devotion was the

natural and beautiful outcome of the overthrow of her cousin's married life. To sundry other people the new departure presented other aspects. Dennis Falconer, spending a few days at the house near the Lake of Geneva, regarded with eyes of stern distaste what seemed to him the most affected, superficial travesty of the maternal sentiment ever exhibited. Meditating upon the subject by himself, he referred Mrs. Romaine's assumption of the character of devoted mother to the innate artificiality of a fashionable woman denied the legitimate outlet of society life. He went away marvelling at the blindness of his uncle and cousin, and asking himself with heavy disapprobation how long the pose would last.

Time, as a matter of fact, seemed only to confirm it. The half-laughing, wholly artificial manner with which Mrs. Romaine had alluded to her "boy" in Mrs. Pomeroy's drawing-room was the same manner with which, in his early school-days, she had alluded to her "little boy," only developed by years. Mr. Falconer's death and her own consequent independence had made no difference in her way of life. Julian's education had been proceeded with on the Continent as had been already arranged, his mother living always near at hand that they might be together whenever it was possible. In his holidays they took little luxurious tours together. But into society Mrs. Romaine went not at all until Julian was over twenty, when the haze of fifteen years had wound itself about the memory of William Romaine and his misdeeds. Of those misdeeds William Romaine's son knew nothing. The one point of discord between old Mr. Falconer and his niece had been her alleged intention of keeping the truth from him, if possible, for ever. Mr. Falconer's death removed the only creature who had a right to protest against her decision. When Julian, as he grew older, asked his first questions about his father, she told him that he had "failed," and had died suddenly, and begged him not to question her. And the boy, careless and easy-going, had taken her at her word.

With the termination of Julian's university career, it became necessary that some arrangement should be made for his future. As Julian grew up, the topic had come up between the mother and son with increasing frequency, introduced as a rule not, as might have been expected, by the young man, whom it most concerned,

but by Mrs. Romaine. From the very first it had been presented to him as a foregone conclusion that the start in life to which he was to look forward was to be made in London. London was to be their home, and he was to read for the English Bar; on these premises all Mrs. Romaine's plans and suggestions were grounded, and Julian's was not the nature to carve out the idea of a future for himself in opposition to that presented to him. Consequently the arrangements, of which the bright little house in Chelsea was the preliminary outcome, were matured with much gaiety and enthusiasm, in what Mrs. Romaine called merrily "a family council of two"; and a certain touch of feverish excitement which had pervaded his mother's consideration of the subject, moved Julian to a carelessly affectionate compunction in that it was presumably for his sake that she had remained so long away from the life she apparently preferred.

The arrangement by which Mrs. Romaine eventually came to London alone was not part of the original scheme. As the time fixed for their departure thither drew nearer that feverish excitement increased upon her strangely. It seemed as an expression of the nervous restlessness that possessed her that she finally insisted on his joining some friends who were going for two months to Egypt, and leaving her to "struggle with the agonies of furnishing," as she said, alone.

The arrangement had separated the mother and son for the first time within Julian's memory. The fact had, perhaps, had little practical influence on his enjoyment in the interval, but it gave an added fervour to his boyish demonstration of delight in that first moment of meeting as he held her in his vigorous young arms, and kissed her again and again.

"To think of my having surprised you, after all!" he cried, gleefully, at last. "You ought to have had my telegram this morning. Why, you've got nervous while you've been alone, mother! You're quite trembling!"

Mrs. Romaine laughed a rather uncertain little laugh. She was indeed trembling from head to foot. Her face was very pale still, but as she raised it to her son the strange, transfigured look had passed from it utterly, and her normal expression had returned to it in all its superficial liveliness, brought back by an effort of will, conscious or instinctive, which was perceptible in the alight stiff-

ness of all the lines. At the same moment she seemed to become aware of the close, clinging pressure with which her hand had closed upon the arm which held her, and she relaxed it in a little gesture of playful rebuke and deprecation.

"What would you have, bad boy?" she said lightly. "Don't you know I hate surprises? Oh, I suppose you want to flatter yourself that your poor little mother can't get on without you to take care of her! Well, perhaps she can't, very well. There's a demoralising confession for you, sir!"

But it was not such a confession as her face had been only a few minutes before; in fact, the spoken words seemed rather to belie that mute witness. They were spoken in her ordinary, most artificial tone, and the gesture with which she laid her hand on his arm to draw him into the drawing-room was one of her usual pretty little affected gestures—as sharp a contrast as possible to the first clinging, unconscious touch.

"Let me look at you," she said gaily, "and make sure that I have got my own bad penny back from Africa, and not somebody else's!"

She drew him laughingly into the fullest light the fading day afforded, and proceeded to "inspect" him, as she said, her face full of a superficial vivacity, which seemed to be doing battle all the time with something behind—something which looked out of her hard, bright eyes eager and insistent, and strangely like suspense or dread.

The figure that stood opposite was one that any woman might have been proud to call her son. Julian Romayne was a tall, well-made young man—taller by a head than the mother smiling up at him; he was well developed for his twenty-three years, slight and athletic-looking, and carrying himself more gracefully than most young Englishmen. But except in this particular, and in a slight tendency towards the use of more gesture than is common in England, his foreign training was in no wise perceptible in his appearance. The first impression he made on people who knew them both was that he was exactly like his mother, and that his mother's features touched into manliness were a very desirable inheritance for her son; for he was distinctly good-looking. But as a matter of fact, only the upper part of his face, and his colouring, were Mrs. Romayne's. He had the fair hair

which had been hers eighteen years ago; he had her blue eyes and her pale complexion, and his nose and the shape of his brow were hers. But his mouth was larger and rather fuller-lipped than his mother's, and the line of the chin and jaw was totally different. No strongly-marked characteristics, either intellectual or moral, were to be read in his face; his expression was simply bright and good-tempered with the good temper which has never been tried, and is the result rather of circumstances than of principle.

That strange something in Mrs. Romayne's face seemed to retreat into the depths from which it had come as she looked at him. Apparently she did not find what she had dreaded to find. She finished her inspection with a gay tirade against the coat which he was wearing, and Julian replied with a boyish laugh.

"I knew you'd be down upon it!" he said. "I say, does it look so very bad? I'll get a new fit out to-morrow—two or three, in fact! Mother, what an awfully pretty little drawing-room! What an awfully clever little mother you are!"

He flung his arm round her again with the careless, affectionate demonstrativeness which her manner seemed to produce in him, and looked round the room with admiring eyes. They were the eyes of a young man who knew better than some men twice his age how a room should look, and whose appreciation was better worth having than it seemed.

"You're quite ready for me, you see!" he declared delightedly. "What did you mean, I should like to know, by wanting to keep me away for another fortnight?"

There was a moment's pause before Mrs. Romayne spoke. She looked up into his face with a rather strange expression in her eyes, and then looked away across the room to where a little pile of accepted invitations lay on her writing-table. That curious light at once of battle and of triumph was strong upon her face as it had not been yet.

"Yes," she said at last, and there was an unusual ring about her voice. "I am quite ready for you!"

Something more than the furnishing of a house had gone to the preparation of a place in society for the widow and son of William Romayne, and only the woman who had effected that preparation knew how and how completely it had been achieved.

A moment later Mrs. Romayne's face

had changed again, and she was laughing lightly at Julian's comments as she disengaged herself from his hold, and went towards the bell.

"Foolish boy!" she said as she rang. "I'm glad you think it's nice. We'll have some tea."

She had just poured him out a cup of tea, and quick, easy question and answer as to his crossing were passing between them, when the front-door bell rang, and she broke off suddenly in her speech.

"Who can that be?" she said. "Hardly a caller; it must be six o'clock! Now, I wonder whether, if it should be a caller, Dawson will have the sense to say not at home? Perhaps I had better—" she rose as she spoke, and moved quickly across the room to the door. But she was too late! As she opened the drawing-room door she heard the street door open below, and heard the words, "At home, ma'am." With the softest possible ejaculation of annoyance she closed the door stealthily.

"Such a nuisance!" she said rapidly. "What a time to call! I trust they won't—" And thereupon her face changed suddenly and completely into her usual society smile as the door opened again, and she rose to receive her visitors. "My dear Mrs. Halse!" she exclaimed, "why, what a delightful surprise!" The fact that her unexpected and undesired visitor happened to be "that woman," as she was in the habit of mentally designating Mrs. Halse, only made her voice a trifle sweeter and her smile a trifle more pronounced than usual. "Now, don't say that you have come to tell me that anything has gone wrong about the bazaar!" she continued agitatedly. "Don't tell me that, Miss Pomeroy!"

She was shaking hands with her younger visitor as she spoke, a girl of apparently about twenty, very correctly dressed, as pretty as a girl can be with neither colour, expression, nor startlingly correct features, whose eyes are for the most part fastened on the ground. She was Mrs. Pomeroy's only child. She did not deal Mrs. Romaine the blow which the latter appeared to anticipate, but reassured her in a neatly constructed sentence uttered in a rather demure but perfectly self-possessed voice.

Mrs. Halse had been prevented for the moment from monopolising the conversation by reason of her keen interest in the good-looking young man standing by the fireplace; but Miss Pomeroy's words were

hardly uttered before she turned excitedly to Mrs. Romaine. If she was going to make a mistake the disagreeables of the position would be with her hostess, she had decided.

"It's your son, Mrs. Romaine?" she cried. "It must be, surely! Such a wonderful likeness! Only, really, I can hardly believe that your son—I was ridiculous enough to expect quite a boy! Oh, don't say that he has just arrived and we are interrupting your first tête-à-tête! How truly frightful! Let me tell you this moment what I came for and fly!"

Mrs. Romaine answered her with a suave smile.

"I am going to introduce my boy first, if you don't mind," she said, and then as Julian, in obedience to her look, came forward, with the easy alacrity of a young man whose social instincts are of the highly civilised kind, she laid her hand on his arm with an artificial air of affectionate pride, and continued lightly: "Your first London introduction, Julian. Mrs. Ralph Halse, Miss Pomeroy! He has only just arrived, as you guessed," she added in an aside to Mrs. Halse, "and no doubt he is furiously angry with me for allowing him to be caught with the dust of his journey on him."

But Julian's anger was not perceptible in his face, or in his manner, which was very pleasant and ready. Even after he had handed tea and cake and subsided into conversation with Miss Pomeroy, Mrs. Halse found it difficult to concentrate herself on the business which had brought her to Chelsea. Her speech to Mrs. Romaine, as to the brilliant idea which had struck her just after the committee broke up, was as voluble as usual, certainly, but less connected than it might have been.

"That's all right, then. Such a weight off my mind!" she said, as she copied an address into her note-book with a circumstance and importance which would have befitted the settlement of the fate of nations. "It is so important to get things settled at once, don't you think so? The moment it occurred to me I saw how important it was that there should not be a moment's delay, and I said to Maud Pomeroy: 'Let us go at once to Mrs. Romaine, and she will give us the address, and then dear Mrs. Pomeroy can write the letter to-night.'" Here Mrs. Halse's breath gave out for the moment, and she let her eyes, which had strayed constantly in the direction of Julian and Miss Pome-

roy, rest on the young man's good-looking, well-bred face. "We must have your son among the stewards, Mrs. Romayne," she said. "So important! Now, I wonder whether it has occurred to you, as it has occurred to me, that a man or two—just a man or two"—with an impressive emphasis on the last word, as though three men would be altogether beside the mark—"would be rather an advantage on the ladies' committee! Now, what is your opinion, Mr. Romayne? Don't you think you could be very useful to us?"

She turned towards Julian as she spoke, quite regardless of the fact that Miss Pomeroy's correctly modulated little voice was stopped by her tones, and Mrs. Romayne turned towards him also. He and Miss Pomeroy were sitting together on the other side of the room, and as her eye fell upon the pair, tête-à-tête, as it were, a curious little flash, as of an idea or a revelation, leaped for an instant into Mrs. Romayne's eye.

Julian moved and transferred his attention to Mrs. Halse, with an easy courtesy which was a curiously natural reproduction of his mother's more artificial manner, and which was at the same time very young and unassuming. He laughed lightly.

"I shall be delighted to be a steward," he said, "or to be useful in any way. But the idea of a ladies' committee is awe-inspiring."

"You would make great fun of us at your horrid clubs, no doubt," retorted Mrs. Halse. "Oh, I know what you young men are! But you can be rather useful in these cases sometimes, though, of course, it doesn't do to tell you so."

She laughed loudly, and then rose with a sudden access of haste.

"We must really go!" she said. "Maud"—Mrs. Halse had innumerable girl friends, all of whom she was wont to address by their Christian names—"Maud, we are behaving abominably. We mustn't stay another moment, not another second."

But they did stay a great many other seconds, while Mrs. Halse pressed Julian into the service of the bazaar in all sorts and kinds of capacities, and managed to find out a great deal about his past life in the process. When at last she swooped down upon Maud Pomeroy, metaphorically speaking, as though that eminently decorous young lady had been responsible for the delay, and carried her off in a very tornado of protestation, attended to the front door, as in courtesy

bound, by Julian, Mrs. Romayne, left alone in the drawing-room, let her face relax suddenly from its responsive brightness into an unmistakable expression of feminine irritation and dislike.

"Horrid woman!" she said to herself. "Patronises me! Well, she will talk about nothing but Julian all this evening, wherever she may be—and she goes everywhere—so perhaps it has been worth while to endure her. Hateful woman!" Then, as Julian appeared again, she said gaily: "My dear boy, they've been here an hour, and we shall both be late for dinner! Be off with you and dress!"

It was a very cosy little dinner that followed. Mrs. Romayne, as carefully dressed for her son as she could have been for the most critical stranger, was also at her brightest and most responsive. They talked for the most part of people and their doings; society gossip. Mrs. Romayne told Julian all about Mrs. Halse's bazaar; deriding the whole affair as an excuse for deriding its promoter, but with no realisation of its innate absurdity, and giving Julian to understand, at the same time, that it was "the thing" to be in it; an idea which he was evidently quite capable of appreciating. Dinner over, she drew his arm playfully through hers and took him all over the house. "Let me see that you approve!" she said, with a laughing assumption of burlesque suspense. The last room into which she took him was the little room at the back of the dining-room; and as his previous tone of appreciation and pleasure developed into genuine boyish exclamations of delight at the sight of it, the instant's intense satisfaction in her face struck oddly on her manner.

"You like it, my lord?" she said. "My disgraceful extravagance is rewarded by your gracious approval! Then your ridiculous mother is silly enough to be pleased." She gave him a little careless touch, half shake and half caress, and Julian threw his arm round her rapturously.

"I should think I did like it!" he said boyishly. "I say, shan't I have to work hard here! Mother, what an awfully jolly smoking table!"

"Suppose you smoke here now," suggested Mrs. Romayne, "by way of taking possession! Oh, yes! I'll stay with you."

She sat down, as she spoke, in one of the low basket-chairs by the fire, taking a little hand-screen from the mantelpiece as she did so. And Julian, with an ex-

climation of supreme satisfaction, threw himself into a long lounging-chair with an air of general proprietorship which sat oddly on his youthful figure, and proceeded to select and light a cigar.

A silence followed—rather a long silence. Julian lay back in his chair, and smoked in luxurious contentment. Mrs. Romaine sat with her dainty head, with its elaborate arrangement of red-brown hair, resting against a cushion, her face half hidden by the shade thrown by the fire-screen as she held it up in one slender, ringed hand. She seemed to be looking straight into the fire; as a matter of fact her eyes were fixed on the boyish face beside her. She was the first to break silence.

"It is two, nearly three, months since we were together," she said.

The words might have been the merest comment in themselves; but there was something in the bright tone in which they were spoken, something—half suggestion, half invitation—which implied a desire to make them the opening of a conversation. Julian Romaine's perceptions, however, were by no means of the acutest, and he detected no undertone.

"So it is!" he assented, with dreamy cheerfulness.

"How long did you spend in Cairo?"

The question, which came after a pause, was evidently another attempt on a new line. Again it failed.

"Didn't I tell you? Ten days!" said Julian, and he said no more.

Mrs. Romaine changed her position. She leant forward, her elbow on her knee, her cheek resting on her hand, the screen still shading her face.

"The catechism is going to begin," she said gaily.

Julian's cigar was finished. He roused himself, and dropped the end into the ash-tray by his side as he said with a smile:

"What catechism?"

"Your catechism, sir," returned his mother. "Do you suppose I am going to let you off without insisting on a full and particular account of all your doings during the last ten weeks?"

The words were spoken in the lightest tone possible; but behind the lightness there was a strange, hardly perceptible ring of earnestness which was almost anxiety. It was not perceptible to Julian, however, and he laughed.

"A full and particular account of all my doings!" he said. "I say, that sounds

formidable, doesn't it? The only thing is, you've had it in my letters."

"The fullest and most particular!" she laughed, with that same intense background to her laugh.

"The fullest and most particular!"

"Never mind," she exclaimed, leaning back in her chair again with a restless movement, "I shall catechise all the same. My curiosity knows no limits, you see. Now, you are on your honour as a—as a spoilt boy, understand."

"On my honour as a spoilt boy! All right. Fire away, mum!"

He pulled himself up, folding his hands with an assumption of "good little boy" demeanour, and laughing into her face. She also drew herself up, and laughed back at him. Yet even while she laughed there was something about her which seemed to isolate her strangely from the light-hearted boy, and touch the scene with a shadowy tint of what might in the future reveal itself as tragedy.

"Question one: Have you lost your heart to any pretty girl in the past ten weeks?"

"No, mum."

"Question two: Have you flirted—much—with any girl, pretty or plain?"

"No, mum."

"Have you overdrawn your allowance?"

"No, mum. I've got such a jolly generous mother, mum!"

"Have you? Oh! Have you any secrets from your mother?"

The question broke from her in a kind of cry, but she turned it before it was finished into burlesque, and Julian burst into a shout of laughter.

"Not a solitary secret! There, will that do?"

She was looking straight into his face—her own still in shadow—and there was a moment's pause; almost a breathless pause on her part it seemed; then she broke into a laugh.

"That will do capitally," she said.

"The catechism is over."

She rose as she spoke, and added a word or two about a note she had to write.

"We may as well go up into the drawing-room if you have finished smoking," she said. "It is an invitation from some friends of the Pomeroy's—a dinner. By-the-bye, don't you think Miss Pomeroy a very pretty girl?"

Julian's response was rather languid, but his mother did not press the point. She

turned away to replace the screen on the mantelpiece, and as she did so a thought seemed to strike her.

"Oh, Julian!" she said. "Did you go to Alexandria? What about those curtains you were to get me?"

Her back was towards Julian, and she did not notice the instant's hesitation which preceded his reply. He was putting his cigar-case into his pocket, and the process seemed to demand all his attention.

"I didn't go to Alexandria, unfortunately," he said lightly. "The Fosters had been there, and didn't care to go again."

The clock struck twelve that night when Mrs. Romaine rose at last from the chair in front of her bedroom fireplace in which she had been sitting for more than an hour. The fire had gone out before her eyes unnoticed, and she shivered a little as she rose. Her face was strangely pale and haggard-looking, and the red-brown hair harmonised ill with the anxiety of its look.

"It begins from to-night!" she said to herself. "It is his man's life that begins from to-night!"

"O. V."

A WESTERN SKETCH.

ONE morning, late in the fall, after our autumn "round up," we were all awake by daylight; for the boys on the creek were coming over to help brand the cattle, which were to be turned outside on the range till the following spring. None of the ranchmen round had anything like sufficient food to keep their whole outfit of cattle through the long western winter, so it was the practice to turn outside on the range the roughest of the crowd, and there they had to "wrestle" for a bare existence till the spring came, and they were "rounded up" again by their respective owners.

I had never been present at a cattle branding as yet, but now it was to take place on our own ranch I was much divided between two things: the wish to see all I could of Western life, and the fear that the process of branding might be a painful one to the animals concerned. But when I hinted that it must be anything but agreeable to the cows to have red-hot irons held on their sides, the boys hastened to assure me that only the hair was singed off, and as for the cattle themselves, they looked upon the whole proceeding as rather a good joke; but that I

had better "see the show," and then I could judge for myself.

"Only do take care, there's a good girl, to have plenty of grub for the boys; there are eight of them coming, mostly Americans, and I should like things 'nice,'" added Jack.

Of course, there are different grades of extravagance in the commissariat department, and to some it might mean a French dinner of many courses; but only one adventurous Englishwoman out West ever tried that on, thank Heaven; and I knew that, in the mouths of the boys, "things nice" meant quantity. But, being ambitious, I wished to introduce a few little luxuries into the menu, so made a *compôte* of orange and cocoanut, in addition to the plum-puddings, with clotted cream, which were the principal sweets.

All the chores had to be done before breakfast, as the boys were coming in time for that, trust them, and there was a great deal to be done—more than usual, in fact, for all the cattle which were to be branded had been "cut out" the day before, and driven into the corral, so that, consequently, all the animals had to be fed and watered there.

However, we had an early cup of tea, and "wrestled round" to such good purpose, that when our visitors arrived, punctual to the moment, we were ready for them, and they were ready for breakfast, and did full justice to the sweetbreads, kidneys, and potatoes, each fortifying himself first with a huge plateful of oatmeal or mush, a porridge made from crushed Indian corn.

Then, breakfast finished, the boys went out to attend to the business of the day, whilst E. and myself washed up, and, having got the dinner well forward, went out to see the fun.

It sounded from the shanty as if pandemonium was within a stone's throw. Fires were flaming up into the sky, as the fresh pitch-pine was flung on; and the lowing of the cattle in the outside corral joined with the choked bellowing of the poor thing which was being branded at the time; the shouts of the men, and the sickening smell of the burnt hair made such an impression upon me that I would fain have turned back again and shut myself up in the shanty. But my neighbour gave me a push; and, after all, it had to be done, whether I saw it or not; so the boys helped us up on to the side of the biggest haystack, from which we could safely watch all the proceedings.

We had three corrals, one inside the other, and it was the middle one which was always used for branding purposes, as might be seen from the great pine branding-post fixed in the centre. The three corrals were in a row opening into each other; in the one to our right hand were the animals to be branded—the branding corral itself was at our feet—whilst to the left was the one into which the cows were driven afterwards, the gate of which was left open, so that the creatures, upon recovering from their terror, could wander out, and rush down to the creek for water.

As we looked down the branding corral was empty, the right-hand one was full of the frightened animals, all lowing uneasily, and in the other a cow just let loose was rushing round and round in wild terror, foaming at the mouth and bellowing, but even as we watched it had found the open gate, and bounded away towards the water.

The boys were busy at one of the fires which had got very low and required making up; their arms and necks were bare, their feet in heavy riding-boots, a calico shirt and pair of blue overalls completed their costume, whilst their head-gear consisted of a broad-brimmed cowboy's hat. Grimed and dirty as they were with smoke and heat, they yet looked a fine set of fellows, the sinews on their arms standing out like whipcord with the exertion of "roping" the animals, dragging them round the post, and then throwing them down.

Whilst they were making up the fire one of the boys brought the branding-irons along to show me. Our brand was "O. V." We had bought it only a few weeks before from its former owner; and it took two irons, one for each letter, with long handles like great poker.

The fire had got low, which accounted for the lull in the proceedings, so the boys took advantage of the fact to turn their attention to some cans of lemonade we had brought out with us. One of them was preparing a large branch of pitch-pine to replenish the fire with. This he whittled with his knife to about an inch off the end, leaving the shavings adhering to the bough from the top to the bottom. He took a match, lighted one of them, which caught like tinder, then giving the branch one whirl round his head, he flung the flaming mass into the fire and a goodly pyramid of flame flared up into the deep blue of the sky, casting a

lurid glow all around, and seeming as if it would even melt the snowy peaks in the background; one could almost smell the heat in the clear autumn air. Then, the lemonade cans being quite empty, the business of the day recommenced; and we opened our sunshades, for the midday sun was now pouring down upon the corral, and waited, about a dozen animals being in the outer corral at the time, and prepared to enjoy the fun.

Presently one of the cows was turned into the branding corral, and the gate closed. It came in slowly and reluctantly, but no sooner did it catch sight of Jack, coiling his lariat round his hand, than it began to bellow uneasily and run round and round the corral, whilst the other boys ran after it, and tried to drive it into a corner for Jack to "rope." But it baffled all their skill; the creature seemed to understand what was going to be done to it, and not quite to like the idea, so it kept well out of the way of the rope, bending its head down almost to the ground so as to give the lariat no purchase; it merely glided on to its horns and off again. Presently, however, one of the boys perched himself upon the top railing of the corral, and as the cow came rushing round again in its wild career, pursued by all the other fellows, he gave a prolonged "Hoo-oo-oo!" and the animal, amazed by hearing the cattle call from above, raised its head enquiringly. This was Jack's opportunity; one jerk of his wrist and the rope went whirling through the air in circles, the noose was over the cow's head, and Jack darted in front of it to the branding-post, and twisted his end of the rope round it. Then the other boys hung on to it, and then began between men and animal a great game of tug, the cow pulling with all its strength away from the post, and the men striving with all theirs to bring its head close to it, ready for branding.

All the boys, except one, who was left in charge of the irons and the fire, tailed on to the rope, and slowly but surely they dragged the great brute up to its doom.

Of course, the cow was bound to come in the end, it only drew the noose the tighter by its struggles, and presently, snorting and kicking, with a strange, choked bellow in its throat, its head was brought close to the post. That done, the rest was easy enough; another rope, the heel-rope this time, was slipped over the hind feet, and the poor brute was thrown upon its side. There it lay at last,

panting and struggling, with heaving sides, bloodshot eyes nearly forced out of its head, and swollen tongue hanging half out of its mouth; the triumph of the man over the brute was complete.

Three of the boys sat on its side for greater safety, and the others ran off to the fire, quickly returning with the red-hot branding-irons. The iron "O" was placed on the cow's side first, and a sickening smell of burnt hair arose, and presently a dreadful choked moaning was heard, as the poor beast observed the "V" iron coming. I felt inclined to beg the boys not to do it, but to let the cow go; but perhaps it was as well for our future interests that I had no voice in the matter. Then, the operation being concluded, they proceeded to widen the noose and pass it over the cow's horns as it lay on the ground, whilst another of the boys undid the heel-rope in the same manner, and then one by one they rushed away, leaving the last man sitting on the creature's shoulders.

This was a rather dangerous post, as the cows that have never been branded before are apt to "go for you" when they get on their feet. It was Jack's turn this time, and although rather slow and ponderous as a usual thing, I was amused to see the alacrity with which he rushed to the fence when the other boys shouted "Get a move on you, Jack, old boy!" they themselves being already safely outside. But there seemed to me to be no particular hurry this time, at any rate, as the animal on being left to its own devices lay perfectly still for a few seconds, then got slowly up, bellowed at us all wrathfully, and then trotted quietly through the outer corral and down to the creek for a drink. This finished the morning's performance, at least for E. and myself, as we had to go in and see to the dinner.

We two women felt proud of our table when we had got the meal ready. There was a great round of spiced beef, cold, with plenty of creamy fat—and the western beef is mostly tough and lean—a pair of chickens, a juniper-cured ham, and a beef-steak and kidney pie. For vegetables we had potatoes, a great dish of butter beans, and tomato salad; the sweets I have already mentioned, with the exception of a huge water-melon, pink-fleshed and juicy, with black seeds; and we always thought these had a far nicer flavour than the white-seed variety.

I need hardly say that ample justice was done to the repast by all of us, even E. and myself playing an uncommonly good knife and fork. For drinkables we had plenty of Arbuckle coffee, the kind that leaves a rich yellow stain in one's cup, and acting on the advice of our doctor, who had highly recommended a packet to me, I had brewed some root beer. It looked very nice and frothy in the jug when it was brought to table; but I could not get the boys to try it, except one, who had never seen it before, and so politely took a glass. But as he departed immediately, and went outside to look at the weather, I do not think the root beer can be called a success; Jack remarking drily in his absence: "Guess Dr. Manton is agent for that stuff."

"So he is," I replied; "but how did you find that out?"

He was about to answer when our friend returned, and was finely roasted by the boys, I remarking politely that I hoped the beer had not taken away his appetite; but he only smiled as he answered:

"No, ma'am, I'll allow that it takes more than that trifle to put me off my dinner."

Our dinner-party had its drawbacks, for we were frightfully short of the needful crockery, and had to eat all our food off one plate, making use of our saucers for the sweets. E. had brought her knives and forks along, so we had plenty of those useful articles; but as we only possessed four cups and saucers some of the boys had to drink their coffee out of tin dippers, one of which had a long handle, and was fearfully in the way.

Our salt and pepper castors consisted of two nice clean oyster-shells, whilst a couple of egg-cups held the mustard.

But we had heaps of fun and were very merry over it all, and dinner being over the boys pulled out their pipes and had a smoke, whilst E. and I retired to my room and indulged in the frivolous occupation of hat-trimming. Then after a quarter of an hour's smoke, the men went off to their work, and we women, after washing and clearing up, and setting the table for the next meal, trotted out and took our seats on what the boys were pleased to call the "grand stand" again.

It was a lovely afternoon, not a cloud in the sky, and the sun was blazing overhead, slanting a little towards the Foot Hills, whilst all the grass on the prairie was of a dull uniform grey-green,

except where a bluff or two covered with scrub oak and poison ivy blazed into orange and crimson. There was nothing to be seen of all the cattle that had been branded; they were hidden away in the shade of the cotton-wood trees by the creek, and had forgotten, let us hope, all their sufferings.

But the few remaining animals of the outfit were still cooped in the inner corral lowing piteously, and refusing to touch the great bunch of cool green alfalfa which had been tossed in for their dinner. I grieve to say they did not receive much sympathy from their friends the horses, for my own pony was close to the corral gate, and gazing at his unhappy companions with a most superior air; although there had been a time, not very far back either, when Rorie himself had been under the branding-irons.

The first to be driven into the corral was our poor old "Mooly cow," a white-faced Hereford, very gentle, and a capital milker.

But alas! Mooly, unlike the gentleman in the poem, was blessed with a thousand virtues and one crime—that of breaking bounds. She was always kept in the buck pasture so as to be close at hand, and this field had a "snake" fence which she was very clever at getting through, having found out one corner that was very weak. Having done this she would stray off, and had once or twice got herself mixed up with other cattle outfits; and Mooly was far too valuable to be lost, so the fiat had gone forth that she was to be branded again.

Of course she was an old cow, and had been branded before; in point of fact she had three brands upon her already, as she had belonged to three different owners.

The dear old thing trotted into the corral as quietly as possible; there was no occasion to rush her and shout "Hoo-oo." She obligingly, just for form's sake, stood still and let them rope her, and then of her own accord she walked up to the branding-post and laid down, without any need of the heel-ropes. As for the boys, they fairly burst out laughing; there was evidently to be no fuss or bother over astute Mooly, she was only anxious to get it well over, and on hearing them laugh raised her head and looked up reproachfully, as much as to say, "This is not business; do be quick."

The old cow's "O. V." was quite a work of

art, for she never struggled, and the letters stood out well, and were burnt in clearly.

Then she got up, gazed in mild enquiry at the boys, who had, instinctively, made for the fence, for there was no knowing at branding times what the meekest of cows might do, and giving herself a reassuring shake, trotted off. But not to the creek—Mooly knew a trick worth two of that; she calmly walked up to the big bunch of alfalfa and made a good meal.

As for the boys, they laughed more than ever, and one of them ran to the well and fetched the old thing a bucket of water—a kind attention much appreciated by Mooly, although she stayed firmly by the alfalfa. Water was every-day fare, but a big bundle of fresh-cut alfalfa was something out of the common.

The next animal turned out was a very different creature; a two-year-old Texan steer, with a bull throat, and long straight horns sticking out a yard on each side of his head. This, the boys felt, was going to be a nasty customer; and so it turned out, for, to begin with, these cattle are very strong, and often excessively bad-tempered into the bargain, with small, fierce red eyes, and horns almost straight from the poll, that were capable of giving a very nasty thrust. This gentleman did not like the look of the business in hand at all; he rushed into the corral with a defiant bellow, and tossed his head first to one side and then to the other, pawing the ground, and glancing angrily about him all the time. All at once, before the boys could get the rope over his head, he rushed at the corral fence, stamped and tore at the ground, and tried to knock the top rail to splinters with his great head. But, luckily, the fence was strong, far stronger than it looked, so the creature changed his tactics and began running round and round the corral, keeping his head close to the ground as he did so, and the boys could not, try as they would, make him look up. They shouted, ran in front of him, beat the stable pall with the prong of a long fork they carried. All was of no avail; the steer obstinately kept his nose close to the ground.

At last Jack got tired of it, and catching hold of the pony's mane, he jumped upon his back, and man and horse flew round and round the corral in pursuit. A regular race took place, for Rorie got excited and went so fast that the steer had to lift his head and "go his best" also. Then by a well-directed throw, Jack got his lariat

over the head of his enemy, who tossed up his great horns once he felt the noose, and went for all he was worth; and at last, kicking, struggling, and bellowing, the great brute was brought up to the branding-post and thrown, and I don't know which looked the most exhausted when the contest was over, man or beast.

There the poor thing lay, conquered at last, its eyes bloodshot, its mouth open and frothy, with a swollen tongue hanging half out of it, whilst the noose had had to be so tightened that the rope was hidden by the flesh closing round it; and through the open jaws, dropping saliva, came a fierce, choked moan, whilst its sides heaved and fell as if the creature was dying.

As for the men, they were not much better; they stood or sat on the animal gasping for breath, and passed their shirt-sleeves over their foreheads to wipe off the moisture which literally poured off their faces, all blackened and streaked with the smoke from the fire which was blazing up into the clear air. It was certainly no childish play the boys had been through; their faces were crimson with exertion, whilst the veins on their arms stood out like a network of ropes.

I felt disgusted with the whole scene; for the moment it seemed as if one stood somehow outside the pale of civilisation, and were about to assist at a Pagan sacrifice.

"Let us go home. I don't like this," I said to E. "Let us go home and make some tea and be Christians again."

E. laughed.

"Why, you are surely going to wait and see the end; you said you wanted to see a Western branding, anyhow." Adding encouragingly: "You'll soon get used to all this; it turned me at first."

At this moment came a moan of terror from the prostrate creature on the ground, and then arose again the sickening smell of burnt hair, and the operation was over.

Then, with the utmost caution, the heel-ropes were loosened, passed over the legs, and the boys bolted. Not a moment too soon either, for, with an angry bellow, and driven half frantic with pain and terror, the steer was up and after them, whilst they flew for the fence. One, two, three, all were safely over but poor Jack, whose foot had caught in one of the branding-irons which had been hastily flung down; and at the same moment, with a roar of satisfaction, his enemy discovered the fact and went for him.

Heaven help Jack if those long, pointed horns were thrust into his side! We women on the haystack gave a scream of terror, the shrillness of which startled the enemy, for he actually paused for a moment, and looked to see where the new danger came from, one of us, in a frantic desire to do something, however silly, flinging her crimson "en tout cas" into the corral, or, rather, lodging it upon one of the posts; and the Colonel, who always had his wits about him, seized hold of it and presented it to the animal as a peace offering. My poor parasol! For many weeks afterwards fragments of the silk decorated the corral. The ivory handle was split into a thousand fragments, whilst as for the framework—well, the less said about that the better. But during its destruction Jack picked himself up and got out of the way of danger.

After that E. and I had had enough. I did not feel like "getting used to it" somehow, and even the boys were, I think, glad when that day's work came to an end. We soon had supper spread—half-past six was our time out West—it was simply dinner over again, with the addition of jam, cake, and potted meat; butter, of course, you have with every meal; but the boys had still, poor things, the chores to see to.

One of them milked, another brought in the wood for the next day, a third fed the animals, whilst the others got some hot water from the reservoir, as the boiler is called, and, taking pails and lumps of yellow soap, enjoyed the luxury of a wash outside the kitchen door, and then did their hair with the aid of Jack's comb and a hanging glass in the kitchen.

When they were all tidy we sat down to supper—we were rarely too tired to eat, except at the midday meal in the very great heat; and afterwards—I never did any washing-up after supper, except on Sunday—we all sat out, the boys with their pipes, and E. and I idle in our two rockers.

The day's work was finished, and a beautiful, a holy calm, born of Nicotiana and a good meal, brooded over us all.

At the same time I had come to one conclusion, and wished to make it known to my men-folk.

"Boys," I said solemnly, "I suppose branding is a necessary evil?"

My own boys looked as if I had taken leave of my senses, the strangers indulgently, whilst the Colonel was heard

to murmur that "There was money in it."

"That may be," I replied; "but I never mean to be present at a branding again."

And I kept my word, in spite of persuasions and chaff. I could chaff back again, and did. That day's work was my first and last experience of cattle branding.

Presently our visitors departed, and we saw them over the track after the nine-fifteen p.m. express had gone thundering past, and watched them loping across the prairie, their clearly-cut figures standing blackly out against the sky.

We four—for E. was spending the night—walked slowly back to the shanty, and being very tired, went to bed, where, in spite of feeling the laths of the wooden bedstead through the mattress filled with shavings, we slept soundly till the morning sun, streaming in through the uncurtained window, awoke us.

SARAH TINGLE'S YOUNG MAN.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"SARAH TINGLE'S been an' gotten 'ersen a young mon." So ran the swift rumour from one end of the lane to the other. It began at the low end where the slatterns rise at ten, and crawling off their filthy beds, talk and gossip till the big bells warn them that the works are loose.

Then arise the sounds of hasty, ill-considered frying; and the morning smells change to afternoon.

The lane stretches far—far—for those who understand. One end worships the great plaster goddess, Respectability; and from that you come down by degrees through the houses, fifty odd on either side, towards the other end, whose god is their belly. But their cooking is execrable, and the bloated, fish-eyed man and his fat wife in the public-house at the corner are the high priests of the shrine whereat they worship.

Down there prevails an easy freedom. Every lady and every lady's man can hold a reception at any time. And there is no trouble about it either; they have only just to stand out on the pavement, or to queen it from the easy vantage of their doorstep. This is apt to bring about ill-assorted friendships, some of which lead to the police court.

But the ladies of the upper end do not use the pavement except to shake the early mat, or clean the doorstep; and

then it is hardly etiquette to recognise them. When you call, it appears they each live in an almost Eastern seclusion. To be thoroughly respectable it is necessary to feel that your neighbours are hardly on the same social level as yourself.

Mrs. Tingle was equal to her station. She constantly remarked that, from one week's end to another, she never got out, which in itself was evidence of her high standing as an artisan's wife. Of course that did not include Monday's marketing. She rose early and tied the children's strings with a pull and a push, sending them off to school in good time.

She had them all Church-christened, too, which in itself is another instance of respectability, but they attended the chapel Sabbath school because the prizes were a little better. There were ten of them living, and Sarah was the eldest, her brother George coming next.

"Sarah Tingle's gotten 'ersen a young mon" ran up the street on both sides; all the tongues were busy. As the years of her Sunday schooling had multiplied, she was drafted into a "Young Women's Bible Class" held every Sunday afternoon by Miss Habbijam at her own residence.

The girl was a "chapel member," but still no one had ever been seen to walk home with her on Sunday. "Walking" at chapel comes by favour, and there are not many young men. Those there are are usually eminently steady, and come of families with an eye to the main chance. If we acted upon our original motives, it would have been the heavy fathers, not the girls, who were walked with. For they were all warm men. This only holds good in well-to-do chapels—and not always then.

In large families Providence usually places a girl in the forefront to do the brunt of the work—in order that the boys may grow up comfortably, spend their wages as they please, marry a slut at twenty, and begin all over again.

Jane, the fourth child and second girl, was quick and sharp. Early in life she demanded to be a school-teacher. She had passed her standards with flying colours, and was now busily equipping herself with loads of useless knowledge to disgorge into other eager little ostriches. So Jane learnt and taught while Mrs. Tingle and the eldest daughter cleaned, and cooked, and washed, and mended; and her mother's inexhaustible monologue ran like her own shadow by Sarah's silent side.

She was hard-working, steady, and dependable. One unattainable wish she had—domestic service. The neat and decorous black dress relieved by the tidy apron, white cap, and muslin streamers, were her cherished vision. But Jane early and loudly proclaimed her intention of "bein' teacher"; Sarah must bide at home.

Miss Habbijam had a new girl in her class one Sunday—a girl with red cheeks, laughing face, and a new hat. Such a hat, with yellow plush and cock feathers!

Now, in chapel ethics, if you have a white straw hat you may trim it with white satin, and any shade of ostrich feathers you please; but if it is black, the only colour you may introduce is a chilly red or crimson; from this a detonating blue is the only possible alternative.

"Teacher" glanced at the hat. To the prim, flat-chested, and warm-hearted woman, it seemed almost a defiance. So much so, that she determined not to touch upon the subject of dress till she had prayerfully considered the case of Mary Jane Cooper.

"Sarah," said Miss Habbijam, appearing unexpectedly at Mrs. Tingle's door the following Thursday morning, "there will be no class on Sunday. I have been called away to help nurse my brother, who draws near his end," and the red eyelids twitched in sympathy with the sallow face. "Will you let Martha Foulstone, Clara Widdicombe, and Mary Jane Cooper know?"

"That I will, Miss Habbijam. An' when will you be back?"

"I cannot tell," with another twitch.

"An' she might a' been findin' some one else to be runnin' of errands," remarked Mrs. Tingle disparagingly; "but there, gentry thinks other folk 'as nowt to do, like theselves."

"I might run round after dinner," said Sarah, unheeding. "There'd be time 'tween then an' tea."

"I'm fair 'shamed on ye, I am!" dropping into her usual tone of querulous complaint. "Ironin' not half done yet, an' Albert's trousers tore from one end to t'other. How's one pair o' 'ands to get through't all, I'd like to know!"

That Mrs. Tingle could and would complain of every proposition her daughter knew well. After washing up she put on her brown stuff dress, plain black jacket, and hat, black, with a modicum of red ribbon. It did not take long to go round by the Widdicombes' to the Foulstones';

but from there it was a little further to the Coopers' row of new, bright-pink brick houses. There was a little strip of garden in front, filled with auriculas, cabbages, and a lettuce-bed.

"Coom yo in! coom yo in!" cried Mary Jane, her jolly face beaming with pleasure. "Mother, this is one o' t' class mates."

"Ye're kindly welcome," nodding her head from the rocking-chair, where she encircled the fat baby with her stout arm. "Won't ye step forward?"

Sarah hesitated. The whole atmosphere was new to her. The friendly reception amazed and touched her, while Mary Jane's pleasure at seeing her attracted the lonely nature.

"It's nobbut ma son," said the mother with a mirthful glance round; "he wunna eat thee!"

Benjy Cooper sat in the corner between the fire and the window, on the settle. In front of him stood a round white-wood table, with its three painted legs straddling apart. On it lay his "pit-can"—facsimile still of the old pilgrim bottles—also his dinner of hot Yorkshire pudding and rich gravy, almost finished.

"A'hm in ma blacks still," he said jovially; "happen t'young lady's afeard on a pit lad?"

Mary Jane giggled loudly. Little David, standing by his brother's knee waiting for his "piece," glanced wrathfully at the intruder.

Sarah was drawn into the house, and sat down before the big fire, she hardly knew how or why. As she talked shyly of the class and Miss Habbijam she saw the collier watching her intently.

"That's a likely-looking lass," he said, bringing his broad hand down on the table after watching her go past the window.

"She'll never look at thee, Ben," giggled his sister. "They're all stuck-up, that lot at class. She'll never tak' up wi' a miner."

No class on Sunday afternoon left Sarah Tingle rather unsettled. Her father and mother were sleeping heavily, her father in his stocking feet and without his coat, as becomes a careful British voter of his position. From habit Sarah had put on her things and was wondering whether to call for Clara or Martha to go for a walk, when a knock came at the door.

It was Mary Jane Cooper in the hat, and, besides, a brilliant new tie of the latest mauve, a bribe last night from Ben.

The eager charm of her manner carried sober Sarah away with her.

"Father 'e works wi' Parker's like yourn," remarked the girl presently, "so do Jim." This was to show, that though her mother might be of collier origin, on the paternal side she was as well-born as her new friend. "Gran'mother she brought up Ben. When 'e was a little chap she took 'im, so's when 'e got a bit older 'e cu'd go i' t' pit an' work for 'er. She were main set on Benjy, she were, an' 'e never left 'er till she died, an' then 'e come to us. 'E guv' me this, 'at 'e did."

Sarah went back to tea at her new-found friend's persuasion, and when she came home that evening, Rumour flew up the lane with her particoloured wings, "Sarah Tingle's gotten 'ersen a young mon."

When her parents heard of it, Mrs. Tingle's wrath was extreme. That her daughter "as 'ad allays kept 'erself to 'erself" should go and take up with a common collier! Why could she not find some decent working man, instead of this black trash?

Then from the particoloured wings fell feathers telling small tales to Benjy's disadvantage. He was wild and reckless, not over steady either. Last races he and eight others took a first-class saloon, and went in style, with champagne. He betted regularly, they said, and even Sarah knew that she had often waited patiently with him to see the winner posted in the "Tizer" window.

Miss Habbijam, in her new crackly crape, heard of Sarah's engagement, and kept the girl one afternoon, after class, to ask about it, telling her seriously of the grave responsibility of her choice, and drawing an awful picture of the fate of the drunkard's wife. Sarah cried at first, but she flushed up at this description of her lover.

"Benjy's none that," she said indignantly, "an' I'll thank you to let him an' me alone, Miss Habbijam."

But the good soul cared too little for her own feelings, and too much for the girl's future, to be offended. She begged Sarah to consider prayerfully what she was doing, and implored her, at the least, to insist upon Ben's signing the pledge.

Sarah was a total abstainer; her father had always held it a pity to waste good liquor upon females; but she dreaded her sweetheart's ready wrath, and with good cause.

His face clouded darkly while he heard her out.

"I'll none o't!" he exclaimed fiercely. "Thee canst take me, or thee canst leave me, as I am. It's this Psalm-singing old methody as is settin' them agin me!"

But Sarah caught his arm in sudden fear.

"Eb, Benjy, lad, thee knowat thee has a glass too much sometimes. It's thot. An' whatten I do, if thee tookat it often?"

He broke from her.

"Thou canst sit oop an' sing, while ah go to the dogs."

The girl's cry was unheeded, while he plunged round the corner and down the street. Poor Sarah! she waited, hanging about that Sunday night till nearly ten, to meet her mother's reproaches on her return, and to sob half the night.

Benjy, singing and shouting in the public-house till they were all turned out, felt no compunction; he was angry.

But as the days went on, he began to long for Sarah. He was not vicious, only reckless, spoilt, and utterly uncontrolled. It seemed to him a fine thing to be angry, and pay her out for meddling; but as the man he could afford to take her back into his lordly favour again. Her people might look down on him as a collier, but he was earning higher wages than any of them, and could hold up his head with the best.

So it came that after a wild week he found Sunday afternoon hang heavy on his hands, even though he spent it playing cards in the old quarry. But he was too proud to seek her out that evening; he would wait till Monday.

He washed himself then with extra care, threw on his cap with jaunty air, and swaggered off towards her house.

"Sarah," said Albert, appearing on his return from school, "yo're wanted."

"Wanted?"

A dull red burnt in her cheeks, with hope deferred new-sprung.

Albert nodded.

"Outside, an' 'e gien me a penny to say so."

He was standing in the dark entry passage, and she ran into his arms. So peace was made, for war to break again. She was sober, careful, and steady; his wild ways, while she loved him, jarred and shook her moral equilibrium, till she knew not where to turn. He would boast of his powers of work, his successes with the

girls, his readiness to drink or fight with any man; it was a word and a blow with him, he bragged.

"Sarah Tingle's gotten 'ersen a yooing mon," but what heart-breakings, what searching sorrows had she taken to herself also!

The last time he stayed away was for three weeks, and only once did she catch sight of him. Reeling home, towards evening, still in his pit-clothes, she saw him return the light laugh of a slattern at the street corner. She turned, hurrying away stricken, with downcast head. He was killing her love fast, she felt, and through the long years of wedlock she looked, seeing herself an ill-used, starving wife while he rioted with his boon companions.

When he waylaid her a few days afterwards, she refused to take him back. "Go thy ways," she cried hotly, "thee and thy drinkin'!"

"Dost mean it, Sarah?" he asked. The light had died out of his eyes. He had come prepared to make some sacrifices for her; even prepared to sign the pledge for six months and keep it. He was sick at heart of these unprofitable ways, frightened secretly at the strange hold the public-house seemed lately to have had over him. But of this she knew nothing. The neighbours' sneers, her mother's forebodings, even her own love, embittered the reproaches she cast at him.

"Happen thee'at takken oop wi' another chap!" he asked in dangerously quiet tones.

She knew herself to be unacceptable to most men, and the thought that he, the favourite with all women, was jeering at her, flared over her soul like molten iron.

"Ay, if I am, it shall noan be a black drunken good-for-nowt!" burst from her furious lips.

"Then go and take him," he answered with a curse, breaking away.

So at last she was free, and the future lay utterly blank and dreary before her. What was her life—what could it be—without him? His cheery voice and curly hair, the strong, broad shoulders, the easy good-nature and open-handedness, each and all seemed to tear chasms in her heart.

Half that night Ben roamed about in furious jealousy. That Sarah, his lass, who had shown herself dainty and delicate beyond his experience of women, should

have taken another lover, maddened him beyond control. He was like a demon at work next day, cursed and swore at his trammer for not being quick enough, and at the deputy for stopping his holing at a dangerous point. But when he came back his mood had lowered into sullen silence. He came of generations of collier blood on his mother's side, and to her kin he had clung proudly; his father was an artisan, and from him came his impulse now.

It was past four when he roused himself from brooding in his corner, and, still unwashed, took his way up to the room he and Jim and the two younger boys shared. Parker's works were not loose till half-past five; but without leave asked he broke open Jim's box, threw out the few things, and possessed himself of the pistol he knew lay at the bottom.

The collier does not play with firearms; to him who uses dynamite they are mere toys. But the young workman longs for a revolver even more than for a watch, and here was Jim's.

"Sarah," said Albert, appearing on his return from school, "yo're wanted."

"Wanted?" looking hastily up from the teapot, and splashing herself with the hot water.

"An' ye'll just finish cutting t' bread afore ye go," broke in Mrs. Tingle's monotonous complaint; "the gell's daft, I reckon, flying out every minute. Reach me t' jug, Sarah, and give Albert his piece; the poor child's clemmed."

To Ben, every second was an hour's insult. In some undefined way, he had fancied coming here prepared for the last extremity would somehow bring about the reconciliation which, in his foolish, heated brain, he still longed for. But here he was, and waiting, while she would not come. His rival must be there! Then he would shoot him like a dog. Yes, him first, and her too! He clenched his strong teeth so fast that it was pain to open them again; he would give her till he could count twenty.

"One, two, three," the numbers seemed treading on each other. "Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen," he pulled out the pistol to be ready. In the excitement of the moment he was counting aloud, and at "nineteen," Sarah stood in the dark entry. Each could but just see each other by the light at either end.

Whether she screamed first, or he fired, no one knows; but she screamed again,

one shriek of shrieks! There was a second shot, and as all rushed to the place, a third, as Benjy leant up on both arms to put himself this time truly out of his miserable agony.

"Sarah Tingle's sweet-art's shotten 'imself an 'er too!" And this time again, Rumour did not lie.

ANONYMITY.

WHAT is interesting, or powerful, or humorous, or pathetic, will commend itself to those who are capable of judging, whoever may have said or written it. But this fact does not settle the question as to the advantage or disadvantage of anonymity. There are things which are matters of opinion. If we do not know by whom the opinion is expressed how can we gauge its worth? Then some men have special sources of information. We may easily attach too much weight to such circumstances. We should be saved from many snares if we had the courage to decide upon general considerations of probability and the balance of evidence instead of slavishly submitting to the judgement of experts. Even as to matters of fact, anonymity is not so much out of court as might be supposed. What does it matter who compiled the multiplication table? The student in "Punch" asked his teacher as to Euclid's character for veracity; being told that no doubt it stood high, he proposed to take his conclusions for granted, and so save himself the trouble of working out the problems.

The truth of a story is not to be decided upon only according to the character of the narrator. There are some things we should believe, whoever stated them; there are those we should receive only at the mouth of a few trusted souls; there are others we should not believe, whoever affirmed them. If all Her Majesty's Ministers of State and the whole Bench of Bishops, to say nothing of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, and Court of Common Council, were to take their solemn affidavit that the statue of Charles the First, from Charing Cross, was trotting merrily up the Strand, a man in his sound senses would not credit that affidavit and go out to see. It would be in vain to raise the theological question, and bring in Bible miracles; those miracles had preliminaries, and surroundings, and purposes wanting in this case. Belaters of super-

natural experiences are not all wilfully insincere, but they are very untrustworthy. The belief that the grand order of nature has been disturbed on account of their little twopenny-halfpenny affairs indicates a screw loose somewhere; politeness would prevent our contradicting, and we might even seek to conciliate the ghost-seer by a sickly smile, but beyond that we could not go. There are stories that keep clear of the supernatural, yet are so full of inconsistencies and improbabilities that, as Hamlet says of the body of Polonius, they can be nosed.

Newspaper correspondents are in the habit of expressing a great deal of indignation at what they call anonymous slander. Mostly the name of the accuser is not at all required. The charge, perhaps, contains an extract from a popular new book, side by side with a closely corresponding passage from an obscure old book. Are the extracts correctly given? Can the coincidence be legitimately accounted for? These are the questions for the incriminated author. Noakes, or Stoakes, or Stiles may have written the letter—who cares which? Or it may be that a certain politician's speech to-day in the north of England is compared with his speech yesterday in the south, and it is affirmed that they do not agree. Nothing rests upon the personality of the writer; the reports of the speeches are open to all. The complaints of anonymity generally come of annoyance, because the criticised man cannot indulge in personalities; retorts which would not touch the merits of the case. If a man has got a satisfactory explanation he supplies it, and is, it may be, thankful to the correspondent who has given him the opportunity.

The argument for signed leaders in the newspapers is that it would do away with the exaggerated importance now attached to articles which, it is said, express nobody's opinion but the writer's, and sometimes not even his. But if we are men of intelligence we hear what the newspapers have to say and judge for ourselves.

The list of authors in the prospectuses of new magazines has attained a portentous length. Everybody we know is going to contribute, and almost everybody that we do not. There are high-sounding, double names, like those of fashionable physicians, names we have never heard of, but we don't like to say so for fear of revealing our ignorance. Men with such names ought to be great. As to the writers who

are known, the editor says to them, "I only want your name; give me anything you have by you." Out of some dusty receptacle comes the manuscript that suffices to carry the name with it, something that the illustrious author threw off before his greatness dawned, which has been in its time returned with compliments by half-a-dozen editors. The most readable part of the new venture is often that which is anonymous. Here, it is possible, will be found flashes of humour and gems of thought; afterwards, when these chance to come to our mind, we attribute them to one of the popular authors.

Many writers have a style pronounced enough to make a signature superfluous. To have signed an article "Thomas Carlyle" would have been like putting beneath a representation of the animal the inscription "This is a horse," or "This is a dog." In the early days of "Punch," Thackeray and Douglas Jerrold no more wanted a distinguishing mark than Kenny Meadows or John Leech; the source of the article was as unmistakeable as that of the cartoon. The style of the leading speakers in a Parliamentary debate asserts itself so strongly that if we begin to read in the middle of a speech we do not want to go back to its beginning to know who unfolds the argument or hurls the defiance.

Anonymity gives a chance to those who have a name to make, if they can. Their contributions are not marked off from the celebrities by the fact that they have an unfamiliar signature. Quality will assert itself in the end, and anonymity makes it more imperative that quality should be maintained. An editor has no occasion to trouble his head much as to his known contributors; if they choose to give out occasionally of their poorest—and most of them do choose—that is their own lookout. The others depend on naked merit.

The ballot has helped to teach us that there is nothing necessarily disgraceful in anonymity. A vote is a vote, whoever gives it; one vote tells upon the result as much as another. And the vote may be as honest as though given in the light of day. But there may be something most shameful in anonymity, as in the case of the ordinary anonymous letter in which often charges are made, difficult to prove or disprove, those which, it may be permanently, poison the mind of the person receiving the communication. A wise man will not burn such a letter, he will put

it away on the chance of convicting the criminal, but he will endeavour with all his might to steel his mind against its influence. Anyway he will be safe in concluding that the writer is a scoundrel to whom lying is second nature. It is anonymity in this form that creates a prejudice against it in other forms.

Criticism, whether it be avowed or anonymous, will have no power to bring into contempt anything that is really great. A man can write himself down, other men can at most delay his fame. We are made ridiculous by ourselves. "The Truthful and the Beautiful," of whom Thackeray speaks in one of his burlesque novels, are faithful to their followers. It is when we depart from them that we expose ourselves to contempt. We have more to gain than to lose from the sharpest criticism. If the veil of anonymity gives the critics confidence in flaying us alive, by all means let them retain it.

WINTER SCENES IN GOTHENBURG.

THE entrance into Gothenburg in winter is apt at times to be startling. The ice of the Gotha river forms rapidly, and unless the cutters from the port are constantly at work, it would soon suspend navigation to and from this very important town. It is a broad mouth, this of the Gotha, so that it is difficult to determine where the river ends and the North Sea begins. The ice stretches for miles. Islets bestud it—rocky little mounds, cold white in their mantles of snow, and for the most part free from houses. The passage of the river is marked by slim fir posts sunk in the water. But the ice often packs, snaps these indicators, and carries them away with the flow of the tide. This constitutes one of the perils of the Gotha mouth in winter. The captains of the merchant vessels here often have their hearts in their mouths.

"That was a narrow thing, between ourselves," said the master of one such vessel to the writer the other day, as we were crashing through the ice on the way towards England. "One of those sticks has gone. It stood on a rock only fifteen feet below water at half tide. We draw twenty feet, and it is half tide now."

As I looked about at the utter desolation of the Swedish coast line within sight, it seemed as if a ship might have a

very bad time here on a winter's night, even though the wind lay low. I agreed with the captain that we were well through our little trial. But he was too busy to trouble himself about such congratulations. We were by no means yet out of the reach of disaster from the same causes.

Once safely in Gothenburg port, one is prone to admire this Swedish town perhaps inordinately. At night it is particularly gay, with its tall electric lamp-posts all along its quays, and its glow of electricity in most shop windows. The Gothenburgers claim that they are one of the best-lit towns in Europe. It is a substantial vaunt; and yet I think they are entitled to the credit of it. One may go into many houses, and many flats of the large houses in the wealthy suburbs, and fail to find gas, lamps, or candles in common use. From my hotel bedroom window I looked across the street into three shops—a saddler's, a gilder's, and a confectioner's. In none of these shops was electricity wanting; and I must say the tarts and bonbons of the last-mentioned merchant had a most seductive appearance under the searching radiance.

After this enterprise of illumination, one admires the exceeding good order, width, and symmetry of the Gothenburg thoroughfares. I know no city to equal it in this respect—at least, no city of its size. Its permeation by fine broad canals is a further beautification of it. To be sure, in winter these are likely to be as rigid as those of the Dutch towns. A number of herring-boats and lesser craft are caught fast in the ice, and vain are the efforts of the big-boated Swedish fishermen to break their way into the harbour. It must be admitted that a street fifty yards wide, with a canal in its midst, having solid and seemingly granite quays and bridges, is a rarity in our own land. The Gothenburgers may well be proud of the foresight and quite remarkable taste with which their ancestors, a century or two ago, designed their city.

In its environs, also, Gothenburg charms for many reasons. Instead of fortifications it is semi-girdled by a broad canal, with artificial woodlands and gardens open to the public. The Nya Alleen, or new avenue, is a delightful promenade. In winter it is apt to be a trifle cold, because of its bracing exposure. But even then there is the chance of sport on its ice; and after all, the dry cold of the Swedish winter does not harass like the conven-

tional sequence of frosts and thaws—with fogs thrown in—which makes up an average winter in England. Near this pretty promenade is the market square, which, as may be supposed, is somewhat picturesque an hour or two ere noon. It strikes one as odd to see so much frozen milk. Eggs, too, are far more plentiful than after an experience of Norway in December one would expect. Perhaps, however, they are merchandise laid in the autumn, and kept "fresh" after the newest methods, or they may be imported "winter" eggs from England, in return for the eggs and butter which—the former in summer and the latter all the year round—Sweden sends so abundantly into London and Hull. There is, however, more dead meat in this Gothenburg market than a vegetarian would like to see. I must confess that the sight of the stiff carcasses of the frozen pigs and sheep is not a conspicuously fascinating one, even to a man who enjoys a pork chop and a saddle of mutton as much as most things.

A mile or two farther from the outskirts of Gothenburg we come to a beautiful little nook of woods and turf and water, called Slottskogsparken. It is a kind of Kensington Palace Gardens. Having previously taken a drive farther afield, and tasted on the palate the very arid more distant surroundings of Gothenburg—granite rocks piled about with a profusion worthy of Sutherlandshire—one is the more disposed to admire this little sylvan resort. In summer of course it offers all the lures of open-air concerts, coffee arbours, and such things, with which Sweden and Europe in general brighten the season of long days. But it is also agreeable enough in winter, when the trees are frosted, the ponds are swept free from snow, and the youth and beauty of the town come hither with their skates. The Swedes may not be such accomplished skaters as their half-brothers of Norway; but they are fairly deft. Some of the Gothenburg maidens are quite clever and graceful enough to excite warm admiration. By the lake side is a convenient café, where Swedish punch and other fluids may be drunk, and where for a few pence you may sup or dine like a bird from a variety of small individual dishes, containing flesh, cooked and uncooked, and, if you are in luck, also some of the very excellent Cardamon cheese that one does not get elsewhere than in Sweden. When the moon is up Slottskogsparken is exceedingly animated, and the tramway from the town

brings visitors to the ice by the score. But the Swedes are—in winter—a somewhat staid, early-going people, and it is depressing to be rung off the ice by a bell at about seven o'clock. Even patriotic Gothenburgers, acquainted with the world outside Sweden, admit willingly that though their town is beautiful, public-spirited, and rich, it is rather dull. The gaiety of Stockholm, they say, eclipses it. But the second city in Sweden ought not to bow to such an admission, especially while it is about twelve hours' distance from the capital by express train, and an indefinite number of hours by a slow train.

It may be expected of me to deduce all this prosperity in Gothenburg from the local system of dispensing spirituous liquors to the public. I protest, however, that I propose to do nothing of the kind. Gothenburg's situation is alone enough to ensure it a considerable future, whether Sweden and Norway continue to run in harness together, pulling different ways now and then as all the world knows, or whether the Norwegian independents by-and-by cut the silken ties which have bound them to their more aristocratic neighbours. Gothenburg is not the immaculate town temperance orators would like to proclaim it. As seaports go, it can, however, still less be twitted with its immorality and corroding thirst.

As a matter of fact, the Gothenburgers do not all drink water. There are quite enough bottles of alcoholic beverages in the shop windows, and the seafaring men who gather about the quays bear the well-known tokens of mortals to whom strong drinks are familiar as household words. I had the advantage of travelling one day for a short distance in company with two Gothenburg young men of the artisan class and a comely, Madonna-faced damsel, who appeared to be the sister of the one and the sweetheart of the other. They carried a bottle of brandy to solace them on the way, and all three of them enjoyed it. I suppose it was a quart bottle, and it was obviously undiluted with water. Yet in an hour they had consumed it, and the empty bottle had been thrown through the carriage window. I make no inferences from this trivial episode of local life; but it proves, I think, at any rate, that the taste for strong drink in Gothenburg is far from eradicated. Of course, however, no one in his senses imagines that the Gothenburg administrators expected to do more than hamper the appetites of their

fellow-citizens in this particular; and herein they have certainly succeeded. Perhaps it is due in a measure to the local licensing system that the English porter manufactory here does so well. On the other hand, it may be due only to the prevalent love of English things in Sweden. It somewhat surprised me at first to find two English novels running simultaneously in two of the daily papers of the place. No doubt, however, it is an affair of political economy. We take Gothenburg's—that is, Sweden's—butter, and it accepts our fiction in serial form.

The customs of the table here differ from our own, as might be expected. An ordinary Swedish dinner is not a very lavish meal in the size and abundance combined of its dishes. But in its opening stage it is decidedly novel. There is a sideboard covered with little plates, upon which sardines, raw herrings, ham and beef slices, pickles, sausage, cheese, and other things are spread, and among these the diner is supposed to trifle away a few minutes. The average Swede, to whom the "smörgasbord," or bread and butter table, as it is called, is a familiar institution, does entire justice to it. He goes from dish to dish impartially, and eats what appears to be a hearty meal before beginning the solid part of his dinner. Then he concludes with a glass of "finkel," or corn brandy, and with a sigh of expectation seats himself for the soup. Living is cheap in Sweden. A discreet person may always dine and sup from the "smörgasbord" alone, for which he would be charged only three or four pence.

A common sight in Gothenburg in winter, just before the heads of the canals get blocked with ice, is the amassing of herrings in huge numbers, and their preparation for export to London, and also to the interior of Sweden. Of late years the catch of these useful fish off the Swedish coasts has been quite small. Norway does an immensely superior trade in them. But now and then a good time comes, and the bustle in the port on these occasions is highly interesting. The fish are hoisted from the smacks by the basketful and packed in ice with great expedition for the vessel getting up steam to depart in the course of an hour or two. Also, they are shovelled on to open railway-trucks one after the other, and these saunter off to the towns between Gothenburg and Stockholm. Terribly slow are the goods trains which convey the her-

rings and other merchandise. They take passengers as well as herrings at a rate of little more than ten miles an hour.

The movements of the herring in the North Sea would interest the Gothenburg fisherfolk if they could understand by what rule—if any—they were regulated. Nothing seems more speculative than the search for these fish. Sometimes tens of years pass without a good herring year. Then, without any apparent reason, they come in multitudes. From the year 1300 to 1556 they are said to have almost disappeared. During the next two centuries their coming and going was extremely erratic. Then the year 1787 arrived, which enriched the merchants of this town famously. Fifteen hundred million fish are said to have been taken then, and "Gothenburg something resembled Melbourne in the early days of the gold diggings." They were eaten, and salted, and boiled down for their oil, and it was devoutly hoped that 1787 was but the first of a series of good years. But the herrings soon showed that they are not to be relied upon, and the last century has been, comparatively speaking, a barren one.

Of the ice needful for their packing there is, of course, no lack here. Lake Wener itself is only about fifty miles away, and the Gotha, between the lake and the sea, if not wholly frozen across, has hundreds of acres of its course covered with ice a foot or eighteen inches thick. The winters are sometimes pretty hard here, though one does not feel the severity very much. Certainly there is never any such lack of fluid at Gothenburg as in the northern parts of the kingdom, where in January the water is all so fast that a baptism is sometimes accomplished with beer or soup. Nor are the dead here necessarily stacked in outhouses during the winter, there to stay until the thaw of spring comes and allows the gravedigger to attend to his clients. Swedish country life is reputed to have many attractive features. This accumulation of the dead villagers above ground must, however, be one of its unpleasant characteristics.

At the same time a funeral even in Gothenburg in winter seems to be rather a chilly and business-like matter. One day, for example, I met a hand-cart on sledge-runners in the street with six coffins set on it lengthwise and crosswise like so many packages. That the coffins were tenanted was clear by the effort demanded of the two men who had to push the sleigh up a

steep hill, and also by the procession of mourners after it. Upon the whole, the advance of cremation seems particularly desirable for the cold lands of Scandinavia.

The visitor who enters Sweden by Gothenburg can hardly fail to be favourably impressed by his first acquaintance with King Oscar's realm. The Gothenburgers are exceptionally polite to strangers, well-informed, and agreeable. Their city is a worthy vestibule to that gayest of gay places in the winter—Sweden's capital. Between Stockholm and Gothenburg there is a healthy sort of rivalry. Both cities are growing very fast. Stockholm claims, with reason, to be much more beautiful and entertaining than Gothenburg; but the Gothenburgers point to their admirable thoroughfares and street canals, and ask if Stockholm can rival these.

The visitor, however, must on no account journey between these two cities by any train that is not express in the strongest degree, else his idea of Sweden may be much changed. The villages of the land are not lovely unless their situation aids them very much. Even this, in winter, may be put out of court, for the many little lakes which lend a charm to the landscape in summer are from November to March obliterated under snow. The ordinary wooden cottage of the Swedish peasant is as plain as it can be. Even the sight of the green leaves at the window-sill within does not allure the stranger. The housewife may be devoted to plants, but why, as a set-off, does she countenance a dung-heap at her front door? It is nothing in excuse that the dung-heap, like everything else in the open, is frozen hard as a rock. King Frost does not reign despotically for twelve months in the year.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "*Alexia*," "*Red Towers*," "*The Little One*," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVI. IN "THE TIMES."

So the village was disappointed of its festival, and there was no wedding in Bryans Church the next day. All the preparations were stopped, Mr. Cantillon alone could have told how; for the labour of this, the interviews, the attempts at impossible explanation, the sending of telegrams, the writing of letters, occupied

him till long past midnight on that Wednesday.

Even he did not know till afterwards how it happened that Mrs. Nugent and her party did not arrive by the evening train. This seemed like a providential interference, for he felt sure that his telegram could not have reached her before she started on her journey to Bryans. Later he knew that she had been stopped at Oxford by a letter from Arthur, written in frantic haste and sent by the guard of the up train, telling her in the barest and hardest language that he had at last come to a full understanding with Poppy Latimer; that, knowing all, she had refused to marry him; that before he could possibly hear from his mother, especially as he gave no address, he would have married Maggie Farrant. She might as well reconcile herself to this, for it was too late for any change.

Otto Nugent had some difficulty in preventing his mother from rushing on to Bryans and hearing the whole truth there, for poor Mrs. Nugent could hardly bring herself to believe in this greatest disappointment of her life.

Geoffrey Thorne had gone home, that Wednesday afternoon, in a state of passionate though silent misery. He did not know what to do. Maggie had told him, amid sobs and tears, that she cared for no one but Arthur; and yet she had not said that she would not marry him, and Geoffrey felt that the matter was in her hands; that he could hardly break off with her at the last moment for a reason that he had known all along. But he was terribly troubled, knowing at last that he had made an awful mistake, and that all the loyalty in his nature could not avert its consequences. He could hardly, for more reasons than one, bear the sight of those two when he met them in the lane; Poppy so calmly happy, Arthur so smart and gently self-satisfied; with the remembrance of Maggie's uncontrollable tears, and the prospect of a life's unhappiness before herself and him.

He went again to the village in the evening, and fortunately met Mr. Cantillon in the churchyard, on his way to Sutton Bryans to see him. The Rector, flushed with fatigue and excitement, had a confused story to tell; but it was at least clear that no marriage was to come off between Captain Nugent and Miss Latimer; and Geoffrey was suddenly conscious that a great burden was lifted from

his shoulders; that he could stand upright again.

"And you, Geoffrey!" the Rector said to him breathlessly.

Geoffrey stood still and said nothing. Then, though the moment was grave enough, he could not help smiling into the anxious, tired eyes that were lifted to his.

"Oh, it will be all right," he said. "I'll go on now and ask her; but of course she will say no."

Then he felt and looked a little ashamed.

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Cantillon, "why did you ever do it? I told you not. Didn't I tell you not?"

"Yes, sir, you did. But you know——"

"Of course I know," the Rector cried impatiently. "If I had not been the most foolish person in the world, I should have known then; and I should never have permitted it for a moment—never, Geoffrey! There's a limit, don't you see? There is a kind of sacrifice which does no good to anybody, and hurts one's self to death sometimes. It is a form of suicide. Come, I'll turn back with you."

As they went along the road they exchanged a few hurried words. Geoffrey hardly dared ask for Miss Latimer, and Mr. Cantillon could not tell him much. His kind heart bled for Poppy. Though he had himself felt that the marriage must absolutely be broken off—at least, that she must not be left in ignorance—the thought of her face when she met them on the terrace gave him the keenest pain. She had locked herself into her room, and not even her aunt had seen her, except for one moment, following her hastily into the house.

"Tell them that all is over—to stop everything," Poppy had said in the coldest and most strained tone, hardly turning as she walked upstairs.

As Mr. Cantillon and Geoffrey approached Church Corner, the heavy door flew suddenly open and the cook rushed out into the road. She was going to fetch Miss Thorne, she said, for they did not know what to do. Miss Maggie was gone; they could find her nowhere; she had not been in for hours; and Mr. Farrant kept calling for her, and was so angry and so impatient that they could do nothing with him.

"Go to my house, Geoffrey," said Mr. Cantillon. "Wait there a few minutes. I will either send or come to you."

Geoffrey stood for a minute or two looking up at the windows. Then he walked

slowly round by the green lane, crossed the steps into the garden, and made his way to the spot where he and Maggie had been sitting that afternoon. It was twilight; all was green, and cool, and still. Standing on the path below that grass bank, Geoffrey could see again the girl's figure crouched there, shaken by sobs, unconsolable, turning angrily away from the poor and sad attempts at comfort which were all he had to offer her. Just above was an old apple-tree, and half hidden in the moss at its roots something white glimmered. With one knee on the bank, Geoffrey stretched out his hand to it; it was an envelope directed to Maggie, and on the clean side were written a few words in pencil. Eyes less keen than Geoffrey's could hardly have read them in the failing light.

"Good-bye, grandfather. Arthur is gone to tell Poppy, and it will all be settled soon. You will know I am safe with him. My heart was being broken. You will be angry, but some day you must forgive me, for I could not marry that man.—Your little girl, "MAGGIE"

Geoffrey flushed and set his teeth as he read the scrawled lines, the evidence of his freedom. The last words seemed punishment enough for having read what did not belong to him.

"Will that scoundrel marry her?" he muttered.

He strode up the garden, along the lawn, up the steps to the parlour window, for he could not go away to Mr. Cantillon's house with that paper in his hand. Looking into the fire-lit room, he saw that Mr. Cantillon was kneeling on the floor, supporting Mr. Farrant's white head. The servants were hurrying in and out. The old man's face looked like death, Geoffrey thought, as he forced the window open and stepped in. The Rector and the maids started and stared, they thought it was Maggie; but though this was only another stroke, not yet death, it was not likely that the grandfather would ever welcome back his little girl through the old window again.

During the next few days, one would have thought that Poppy's old home was uninhabited. No one drove or walked out, no one even went into the garden. No visitors came; the sudden catastrophe at Bryans amazed and frightened the county much more than any illness or

death would have done, and made everybody, even the most eager gossips, quite sure that the only kind thing to do was to keep away. Only the Rector came every evening, bringing all the comfort he could to poor Fanny Latimer, spending hours with her in the silent rooms downstairs. She told him with tears that Poppy was like a stone. She came down to meals, behaved with outward calmness, talked a little about the weather. Afterwards she would stand dreamily about for a few minutes, take up a book and lay it down again, look vaguely out of the windows. Ten minutes would not pass before she would open the door, go out silently and quickly, and in another few seconds her aunt would hear her sitting-room door in the upper gallery open and shut. There she spent her time alone, for Miss Fanny Latimer had not courage or conscience enough to follow her.

"And that girl's picture on the wall! It is there still. She has not moved it. I looked in one day," murmured Fanny.

"Porphyria is great enough to make some allowance for that girl, as you call her," said the Rector, smiling.

"Oh, nonsense, Henry! She cared about that wretched man. She is not a saint—not quite one of the noble army of martyrs, you know. Besides, the ingratitude—but don't let me talk about it, dear."

"I only wish I knew," sighed the Rector.

Some part of his cloud of anxiety seemed to lift a few days later, when one morning he saw in "The Times" the marriage of Arthur Nugent and Margaret Farrant. He suspected, and rightly, that this had taken place at a registrar's office; but so far as it went he found it a certain relief, and promised himself one of these days, as soon as he could leave Bryans and find them, to marry them religiously.

There was no keeping "The Times" from Poppy, for she read it every day. She made no remark to her aunt, but took the paper upstairs to her room and kept it there. She sat on her large sofa by the window, a sweet air blowing in with the scent of May, a world outside bathed in soft, still sunshine. On a little table before her the sheet lay spread out, and from the opposite wall Maggie's face, with all the delicacy that Geoffrey Thorne had given her, looked down at the rich and fortunate woman whose life she had helped to spoil.

As Poppy sat there, somebody knocked gently at the door.

"Come in," she said indifferently; and Mrs. Arch stepped in and closed it behind her.

Looking at her mistress, the good woman's face expressed a tenderness for which no one would have given her credit. To her, at least, Poppy's release from a marriage with Arthur Nugent was a matter of unmixed joy. Her young lady would come to herself some day, she thought, and assured Miss Latimer; then she would be able to rejoice in her escape, though now the shock had almost been too much for her. Arch's own conscience was tolerably clear, she had done her best, she could not have done more against the wish of Poppy's own relations; but now she felt victorious.

"If you please, ma'am," said Mrs. Arch, "would you speak to Miss Thorne? She did not wish to see Miss Frances, so she came straight to me. She told me it was a matter of great importance."

Arch paused, looking at her mistress. For a moment Poppy seemed hardly able to answer. It was the first touch of the outer world, the first voice from the village, the first reminder that anything in life could be of any interest except her own hopeless shipwreck, that had reached her since that day. Nobody had seen her, nobody had told her anything, and certainly she had asked nothing, till in the printed page lying before her she had read the end of the story.

What could Lucy Thorne want? At first Poppy almost said that she could not possibly see any one; but then her conscience rebelled, and the old habit of listening readily to all appeals from the village rose up and asserted itself.

"Yes, Arch. Ask Miss Thorne to come here," said Poppy.

She folded the paper hastily, and threw it into a corner. When Lucy Thorne came into the room, she went forward calmly to meet her, holding out her hand.

Lucy was flushed, and her dark eyes were very bright. She looked almost handsome, and had also an air of desperate decision about her square-set mouth, which suggested riding up to a very awkward fence or an unusually high gate. Her face, full of animation and excitement, as well as doggedness, was an odd contrast to Miss Latimer's. Poppy's pale quietness had something unnatural in it, and did not hide any marks of the storm. With a kind of astonished pity, Lucy thought that

Miss Latimer looked ten years older. The sadness which had once lingered unreasonably about her mouth had settled itself there, and the eyes that used to be so sweet were cold and indifferent now.

"Can she care for that man still?" thought Lucy. But if she believed it she was wrong.

Poppy's pain was that of absolute loneliness, and of realising the almost unthinkable truth that this loneliness had lasted for months and months, all the while she thought herself so happy. It was not so much that Arthur had never loved her, as that the Arthur she loved had never existed at all; that her aunt had consented to deceive her; that her friends had been false to her—Maggie, the girl for whom she had done so much, falsest of all. If the Rector had been true, she hardly realised it and could not speak to him; he belonged too completely to her aunt; he would not understand, and, besides this, Poppy had no wish to complain. She felt rather as if she was dead, or else that life till now had been a dream, all that she trusted failing her. No one had loved her, it seemed; none of those whom she had loved cared whether she was happy or miserable, so long as she carried out their plans for family advantage, for the disposal of her fortune. She was not exactly angry, least of all with Arthur. He, at any rate, had done her the service of breaking the rotten gilded chain that she took for gold.

"Will you sit down, Miss Thorne—is there anything I can do?" asked the Lady of the Manor in her gentle voice.

Lucy hesitated. Now that she found herself in Miss Latimer's presence, speaking became very difficult.

"Well, Miss Latimer," she began, and then, like many plain-spoken, rough-mannered people when they are rather embarrassed, she burst forth and said a great deal more than she had meant to say. "I suppose you know that Maggie Farrant is married?"

Poppy bent her head without looking up.

"As for me, I'm glad of it," said Lucy. "My father is very angry, but of course I think first of Geoffrey, and I always knew that she was utterly unworthy of him. That engagement was a mistake from the beginning, and Geoff knew it himself about as soon as he had done it. But he would have done a good deal more than that for you, Miss Latimer."

This brought a sudden wave of colour

into Poppy's pale cheeks, and a light into her eyes.

"What can you mean?" she said haughtily. "I never asked your brother to—to—"

"No, of course you never asked him. But you liked the idea, didn't you? You thought it a nice arrangement. But if you had known much about Geoffrey—as much as he fancied you did—you would at least have known that such a match could not be a love match. I don't care to have him misunderstood any longer, though to be sure I didn't come here to tell you this, but Geoffrey proposed to Maggie Farrant because it seemed the best way of stopping the talk of the village; and I suppose it did for the time. Now do you understand? It sounds like nonsense to say that a man would give his life to save you from a scratch on your little finger, or even from a breath of annoying gossip—but that's what Geoff meant to do for you. And I can tell you that he would have done it at any time in the last fifteen years, Miss Latimer."

Poppy sat looking on the floor, her head bent down, her colour still burning. At last she said in a low, stifled voice:

"All my friends showed their kindness in the same way. It would have been better for me to know the village gossip after all."

"But he only half believed it," Lucy answered warmly. "And could he tell you? And how could he— Well, we all make mistakes. You say that now, but I doubt if you would have said it then."

"You came here to tell me something else, I think," said Poppy quietly.

"Yes. I came to tell you that Mr. Farrant recovered his consciousness last night. He is very weak, but quite himself. He knows now everything that has happened. He saw the paper this morning—they let him have it before I came down. Well," Lucy went on with a short laugh, "he is going to show Maggie what he thinks of her. He has telegraphed to Oxford for his lawyer. He is going to alter his will, and cut her off with a shilling."

Poppy sat still in the same attitude, saying nothing.

"Serve her right, I said at first, and him too. Life won't be quite so pleasant for

either of them. However, after a few minutes I began to feel sorry for the girl, and to wonder if something couldn't be done, because, after all, he has no other relations, and he will only leave the money to some rubbishing charities that don't want it. And so I thought of you."

"Why did you think of me?"

"Because, don't you see, you are the only person who can persuade him to leave the will as it is. I don't think the poor old man will live long—the next stroke is sure to finish him—and we know that in his heart he loves the girl. He may be sorry by-and-by for having done this, when perhaps it may be too late to alter again. He wants to do it for your sake as much as Geoffrey's—a sort of revenge for both of you. I'm quite sure Geoffrey would be sorry—but he is not here—and besides, poor old Farrant thinks all the world of you."

"What could I do?"

"You could come back with me now, before the lawyer gets here, and tell him that you forgive Maggie, and ask him to forgive her for your sake."

A strange tenderness had found its way into Lucy's voice and eyes. Over Poppy there seemed to fall a cloud of even deeper sadness.

"But if I don't!" she murmured to herself.

Then she looked up, and for a moment or two gazed at the wall above Lucy's head.

"Where is your brother, Miss Thorne?" she said indifferently.

"He went to London yesterday. He is going abroad at once. I don't quite know where."

Poppy got up and walked to the window, and stood there silent for two or three minutes, looking down the avenue. Lucy sat staring anxiously at the graceful, weary figure, the delicate lines of head and neck, the thick hair shining gold in the sun. At last Poppy turned round.

"Let us go," she said.

But the victory was of no use to anybody but herself. For when they reached Church Corner the old man lay dead, his will unaltered, his anger changed into peace.

Poppy went back alone through the wood, where the nightingales were singing, found Aunt Fanny in the garden and kissed her.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IX.

"QUITE a presentable fellow!"

There was an unusual ring of excitement in Mrs. Romayne's voice, and the assumption of playfulness in the maternal pride of her speech was even more than commonly forced and unreal. It was about ten o'clock in the evening, and she was standing in the middle of her own drawing-room, looking up into Julian's face, as he stood before her, having just come into the room, smiling back at her with a certain touch of excitement about his appearance also. He was in evening dress; he had evidently bestowed particular pains upon his attire, and the flower in his buttonhole was an exceptionally dainty one.

Mrs. Romayne was also in evening dress, and in evening dress of the most elaborate description. From the point of view of the fashion of the day, her appearance was absolutely perfect; no detail, from the arrangement of her hair to the point of the silk shoe just visible beneath her skirt, had been neglected; everything was in good taste and in the height of fashion, and the effect of the whole, heightened by the background afforded by the quiet little drawing-room with its softly shaded lamps, was almost startling in its suggestion of luxury and refinement. The fashion of the moment was peculiarly becoming to Mrs. Romayne, and evening dress, with its artificialities and its conventionalities, always enhanced her good points, strictly

conventional as they were. With that light of excitement on her face, and a certain suggestion about her of verve and vivacity, she looked almost charming enough to justify the boyish exclamations of exaggerated admiration into which Julian had broken on entering the room.

There was an eager, restless happiness in her eyes, which leapt up into almost triumphant life as she gave a little touch to Julian's buttonhole; and then pushed him a step or two further back, that she might look at him again, and repeated her commendatory words with a laugh. Then, on a little gesture from her, he picked up her cloak, which lay on a chair near, put it carefully about her, and, opening the door for her, followed her downstairs.

Nearly three weeks had elapsed since Julian's arrival in London, and in that time, short as it was, his expression had changed somewhat. There was a quickened interest and alertness about it which detracted from his boyishness, inasmuch as it made him look as though life had actually begun for him. It would have been wholly untrue to say that any touch of responsibility or ambition had dawned upon his good-looking young face; but a subtle something had come to it which was, perhaps, a materialisation of a mental movement which did duty for those emotions. In the course of those three weeks he had had several interviews with the man with whom he was to read; all the preliminaries of his legal career had been settled; and in more than one half-laughing talk with his mother on the conclusion of some arrangement, the preliminaries had been far outstripped, and he had been conducted in triumph to the bench itself.

But in all these buildings of castles in

the air, there was a factor in the foundations of his fortunes never allowed by his mother to drop out of sight; the main factor it became when she was the architect, relegating to a subordinate position even the hard work on which Julian was wont to expatiate with enthusiasm and energy. Sometimes as a means, sometimes as an end, sometimes as the sum total of all human ambition, social success, social position were woven into all his schemes for the future as they talked together; woven in with no direct statements or precepts, but with an insidious insistence, and a tacit assumption of their value in the scale of things as a truism in no need of formulation.

Society life had begun for him with the very day after his arrival in town, and had moved briskly with him through the following weeks; briskly, but in a small way. Easter had intervened, and no large entertainments had been given. To-night was to be, as Mrs. Romayne said gaily as she settled her train and her cloak in the brougham into which he had followed her, his first public appearance. They were on their way to the first "smart affair" of the coming season; a dance to be given at a house in Park Lane; not very large, but very desirable, at which—again on Mrs. Romayne's authority—all the right people would be.

"You must dance, of course, but not all the evening, Julian!" his mother said, as their drive drew to an end. "I shall want to introduce you a good deal. And don't engage yourself for supper if you can help it. I'm sorry to be so hard upon you!"

She finished with a laugh, light as her tone had been throughout. Then their carriage drew up suddenly, and her face, in shadow for the moment, changed strangely. For an instant all the happiness, all the excitement and superficiality died out of it, quenched in a kind of revelation of heart-sick anxiety so utterly out of all proportion with the occasion, as to be absolutely ghastly; ghastly as only a momentary revelation of the cruel cross-purposes and the hideous incongruities of life can be. The next moment, as Julian sprang out of the carriage and turned to help her out, her expression changed again.

It took them some time to get up to the drawing-room, for though the party was by no means a crush, they had arrived at the most fashionable moment, and the

staircase was crowded. Salutations, conveyed by graceful movements of the head, and society smiles, passed across an intervening barrier of gay dresses and black coats between Mrs. Romayne and numbers of acquaintances above her or below her on the stairs; and as she smiled and bowed she murmured comments to Julian—names or data, criticisms of dress or appearance—until at last patience, and the continual movement of the stream of which they made part, brought them face to face with their hostess. The conventional hand-shake, the conventional words of greeting passed between that lady and Mrs. Romayne, and then the latter indicated Julian with a smiling gesture.

"Let me introduce my boy, Lady Arden," she said. "So glad to have the opportunity!"

She spoke with an accentuation of that self-conscious, self-deriding maternal pride which was her usual pose, setting, as it were, her tone for the night. And certainly Julian, as he bowed, and then shook the hand Lady Arden held out to him, was a legitimate subject for pride. His sense of the importance of the occasion had given to his manner and expression not only that touch of excitement which made him positively handsome, but a certain added readiness and assurance by no means presuming and very attractive. Lady Arden's eyes rested on him with obvious approval, as she said the few words the situation demanded with unusual graciousness, and a sign from her brought one of her daughters to her side. She introduced Julian to the girl.

"Take care of Mr. Romayne, Ida," she said. "He has only lately come to London. Find him some nice partners."

"And let me have him back by-and-by, please, Lady Ida!" laughed Mrs. Romayne, as they passed on with the girl into the room. "There are some friends of his mother's to whom he must spare a little time to-night."

The gay replies with which Julian and his guide—who after a comprehensive glance at him had shown considerable readiness to do her mother's bidding—disappeared in the crowd were lost to Mrs. Romayne; her attention was claimed by a man at her elbow.

"May I have a dance, Mrs. Romayne?" he said.

Mrs. Romayne shook hands and laughed.

"Well, really I don't know," she said; "I think I must give up dancing from to-night. I've got a great grown-up son here, do you know. Look, there he is with Lady Ida Arden! Nice-looking boy, isn't he? It doesn't seem the right thing for his mother to be dancing about, now does it?"

She laughed again, a gay little, affected laugh, well in the key she had set in her first introduction of Julian, and the man to whom she spoke protested vigorously.

"It seems to me exactly the right thing," he said. "The idea of your having a grown-up son is the preposterous point, don't you know. Come, I say, Mrs. Romaine, don't be so horribly hard-hearted!"

"But I must introduce him, don't you see. I must do my duty as a mother."

"Lady Ida is introducing him! She has introduced him to half-a-dozen of the best girls in the room already."

The colloquy, carried on on either side in the lightest of society tones, finally ended in Mrs. Romaine's promising a "turn by-and-by," and the couple drifted apart; Mrs. Romaine to find acquaintances close at hand. Among the first she met was Lady Bracondale, condescendingly amiable, to whom she pointed out Julian, with laughing self-excuse. He was dancing now, and dancing extremely well.

"I am so absurdly proud of him!" she said. "I want to introduce him to you by-and-by, if I can catch him. But dancing men are so inconveniently useful."

Some time had worn away, and she had repeated the substance of this speech in sundry forms to sundry persons, before Julian rejoined her. She had cast several rather preoccupied glances in his direction, when she became aware of him on the opposite side of the room, threading his way through the intervening groups in her direction, just as she was accosted by a rather distinguished-looking, elderly man.

"How do you do, Mrs. Romaine! They tell me that you have a grown-up son here, and I decline to believe it."

He spoke in a pleasant, refined voice, marred, however, by all the affectation of the day, and with a tone about it as of a man absolutely secure of position and used to some amount of homage. He was a certain Lord Garstin, a distinguished figure in London society, rich, well-bred, and idle. He was troubled with no ideals. Fashionable women, with all the weaknesses which he knew quite well, were

quite as high a type of woman as he thought possible or, at least, desirable; and he had a very considerable admiration for Mrs. Romaine as a very finished and attractive specimen of the type he preferred.

She shook hands with him with a gay little laugh, and a gathering together of her social resources, so to speak, which suggested that in her scheme of things he was a power whose suffrage was eminently desirable.

"It is true, notwithstanding," she said brightly. "I am the proud possessor of a grown-up son, Lord Garstin; a very dear boy, I assure you. We are settling down in London together."

"Is it possible?" was the answer, uttered with exaggerated incredulity. "And what are you going to do with him, may I ask?"

"He is reading for the bar——" began Mrs. Romaine; and then becoming aware that the subject of her words had by this time reached her side, she turned slightly, and laid her hand on Julian's arm with a pretty gesture. "Here he is," she said. "Let me introduce him. Julian, this is Lord Garstin. He has been kindly asking me about you."

Julian knew all about Lord Garstin, and his tone and manner as he responded to his mother's words were touched with a deference which made them, as his mother said to herself, "just what they ought to be." The elder man looked him over with eyes which, as far as their vision extended, were as keen as eyes need be.

"A great many of your mother's admirers will find it difficult to realise your existence," he said pleasantly. "Though of course we have all heard of you. You are going to the bar, eh?"

Lord Garstin had a great following among smart young men, and the fact was rather a weakness of his. He liked to have young men about him; to be admired and imitated by them. His manner to Julian was characteristic of these tastes; free from condescension as superiority can only be when it is absolute and unassailable, and full of easy familiarity.

Mrs. Romaine, standing fanning herself between them, listened for Julian's reply with a certain intent suspense beneath her smile; Lord Garstin's approval was so important to him. The simple, unaffected frankness of the answer satisfied her ear, and Lord Garstin's expression, as he

listened to it, satisfied her eye, and with a laughing comment on Julian's words, she allowed her attention to be drawn away for the moment by an acquaintance who claimed it in passing.

There was a slight flush of elation on her face when, a few moments later, the chat between Lord Garstin and Julian being broken off, the former moved away with a friendly nod to the young man, and a little gesture and smile to herself, significant of congratulation.

"Come and walk round the room," she said gaily, slipping her hand through Julian's arm. "There are hundreds of people you must be introduced to."

During the half-hour that followed, Julian was introduced to a large proportion of those people in the room who were best worth knowing. Mrs. Romaine seemed to have wasted no time on the acquaintance of mediocrities.

His presentation to Lady Bracondale had just been accomplished, when Mrs. Halse appeared upon the scene and greeted Mrs. Romaine with stereotyped enthusiasm.

"Such a success!" she said in a loud whisper, as Julian talked to Lady Bracondale. "Everybody is quite taken by surprise. I don't know why, I'm sure, but I don't think any one was prepared for such a charming young man. I've been quite in love with him ever since I saw him first, you know, and we really must have him on the bazaar committee." Mrs. Halse had been out of town for Easter, and the affairs of the bazaar had been somewhat in abeyance in consequence. "Mr. Romaine," she continued, seizing upon Julian, "I want to talk to you. You really must help me——"

At this juncture the man who had pressed Mrs. Romaine to dance earlier in the evening came up to her and claimed the promise she had made him then. She cast a glance of laughing pity at Julian, intended for his eyes alone, and moved away.

"It was too bad, mother," he declared, laughing, as he met her a little later coming out of the dancing-room. "Now, to make up you must have one turn with me—just one. We haven't danced together for ages."

He was full of eagerness, a little flushed with the excitement of the evening, and her laughing protestations, her ridicule of him for wanting to dance with his mother, went for nothing. They only let loose on her a torrent of boyish persuasion, and

finally she hesitated, laughed undecidedly, and yielded. She, too, was a little flushed and elated as though with triumph.

"One turn, then, you absurd boy!" she said, and let him draw her hand through his arm and lead her back into the dancing-room. They went only half-a-dozen times round the room in spite of his protestations against stopping, but Mrs. Romaine was too excellent a dancer and too striking a figure for those turns to pass unnoticed. When she stopped and made him take her, flushed and laughing, out of the room, she was instantly surrounded by a group of men vehemently reproaching her for dancing with her son to the exclusion of so many would-be partners, and laughingly denouncing Julian.

"I couldn't help it!" she protested gaily. "Yes, I know it's a ridiculous sight, but we are rather ridiculous, we two, you know! Come, Julian, take me home this moment! Let me disappear covered with confusion."

She went swiftly downstairs as she spoke, laughing prettily, and a few minutes later Julian, with a good deal of extraneous and wholly unnecessary assistance, was putting her into her carriage.

The whole evening had gone off admirably. Mrs. Romaine said the next morning, repeating the dictum with which she had parted from Julian at night, with less excitement, but with undiminished satisfaction. During the course of the next three or four weeks that satisfaction—a certain genuine and deliberate satisfaction which seemed to underlie the superficial gaiety and brightness of her manner—seemed to grow upon her. The season had begun early, and very gaily, and she and Julian were in great request. It was perhaps as well that little work was expected of the embryo barrister before the winter, for he and his mother were out night after night; welcomed and made much of wherever they went, as so attractive a pair—one of whom was steeped to the finger-tips in knowledge of her world—were sure to be. Mrs. Romaine arranged a series of weekly dinner-parties in the little house at Chelsea, which promised to be, in a small way, one of the features of the season. They were very small, very select, and very cheery; no better hostess was to be found in London, and there was a touch of sentiment about the relation between the hostess and the pleasant young host,

which was by no means without charm for the guests.

Mrs. Halse's bazaar, too, which was affording far more entertainment to its promoters than it seemed at all likely to afford to its supporters, served to bring Julian into special prominence. He was not clever, but there is a great deal to be done in connection with a bazaar on which intellect would be thrown away, and Julian proved himself what Mrs. Halse described effusively as "a most useful dear!" an expression by which she probably meant to convey the fact that he was always ready to toil for the ladies' committee, without too close an investigation into the end to be attained by the said toiling. He was quite an important person at all the meetings connected with the bazaar, and the fact gave him a standing with the innumerable "smart" people concerned which he would otherwise hardly have attained so soon.

His introduction to Lord Garstin resulted, about a fortnight after it took place, in an invitation to a bachelor dinner. An invitation to one of Lord Garstin's dinners was, in its way, about as desirable a thing as a young man "in Society" could receive; and the pleased, repressed importance on Julian's face as he came into the drawing-room to his mother before he started to keep the engagement, was like a faint reflection of the satisfaction with which Mrs. Romayne's expression was transfused.

"You're going!" she said brightly. "Well, I shall be at the Ponsonbys' by half-past eleven, and I shall expect you there some time before twelve. Enjoy yourself, sir!"

He kissed her with careless affection, and she patted him on the shoulder for a conceited boy as he hoped, lightly, that she would not find her solitary evening dull; she had refused to dine out without him, saying laughingly that she should enjoy a holiday; and then he went off, whistling gaily and arranging his button-hole.

It wanted a few minutes only to the dinner-hour when he arrived at the club where the dinner was to be given. Three of his fellow guests were already assembled, and to two of these—well-known young men about town—he had already been introduced.

"You know these two fellows, I think," said Lord Garstin lightly, "but"—turning to the third man—"Loring tells me that

you and he have not yet been introduced. I'm delighted to perform the ceremony! Mr. Julian Romayne—Mr. Marston Loring!"

Julian held out his hand with a frank exclamation of pleasure. He had recognised in Mr. Marston Loring a young man whom he had seen about incessantly during the past month, and who had excited a good deal of secret and boyish admiration in him by reason of a certain assumption of blasé cynicism with which an excellent society manner was just sufficiently seasoned to give it character. The character was conventional character enough, but it was not to be expected that Julian should understand that.

"I'm awfully glad to meet you," he said pleasantly. "I've known you by sight for ages!"

"And I you!" was the answer, spoken with a slight smile and a touch of cordiality which delighted Julian. "The pleasure is distinctly mutual."

Marston Loring was not a good-looking young man; his features, indeed, would have been insignificant but for the presence of that spurious air of refinement which life in society usually produces, and for something more genuine; namely, a strength and resolution about the mould of his chin and the set of his thin lips which had won him the reputation for being "clever-looking" among the superficial observers of the social world. He was nine-and-twenty, but his face might have been the face of a man twenty years older—so entirely destitute was it of any of the gracious possibilities which should characterise early manhood. It was pale, and lined, and worn with very ugly suggestiveness; and there were stories told about him, whispered and laughed at in many of the houses where he was received, which accounted amply for those lines. The pose, too, which it pleased him to adopt was that of elderly superiority to all the illusions and credulities of youth. Marston Loring was a man of whom it was vaguely but universally said that he had "got on so well!" Reduced to facts, this statement meant, primarily, that with no particular rights in that direction he had gradually worked his way into a position in society—a position the insecurity and unreality of which was known only to himself; and, secondarily, that by dint of influence, hard work—hard work was also part of his pose—and a certain amount of unscrupulousness, he was making money at

the bar when most men dependent on their profession would have starved at it.

He had brown eyes, dull and curiously shallow-looking, but very keen and calculating, and they were even keener than usual as they gave Julian one quick look.

"I think we belong to the same profession!" he said with easy friendliness. "You are reading with Allardyce, are you not? A good man, Allardyce."

"So they tell me," answered Julian, not a little impressed by the critical and experienced tone of the approbation. "I can't say I've done much with him yet. One doesn't do much at this time of year, you know."

Loring smiled rather sardonically.

"That's what it is to be a gentleman of independent fortune," he said. "Some people have to burn the candle at both ends."

The five minutes' chat which ensued before the arrival of the fifth guest—a certain Lord Hesselstine, known only by sight to Julian—and the announcement of dinner, was just enough to create a regret in Julian's mind when he found that he and his new acquaintance were seated on opposite sides of the table. Loring's contribution to the general conversation throughout dinner, witty, cynical, and assured, completed his conquest, and when, on the subsequent adjournment of the party to the smoking-room, Loring strolled up to him, cigar in hand, the prospect of a tête-à-tête was greatly to Julian's satisfaction.

"What an odd thing it is that we should never have been introduced before!" he began, lighting his own cigar and scanning the other man with youthful, admiring eyes.

"It is odd," returned Loring placidly, throwing himself into an arm-chair as he spoke, and signing an invitation to Julian to establish himself in another. "Especially as, like every one else, I've been an immense admirer of your mother all this year. I wonder whether you recognise what a lucky fellow you are, Romaine?"

Julian's eyes sparkled with pleasure at the easy familiarity of the address, and he crossed his legs with careless self-importance, as he answered, with the innocence of youth:

"I ought to, oughtn't I? I say, I know my mother would be awfully pleased to know you. You must let me introduce you to her. Are you coming on to the Ponsonbys' to-night?"

"I shall be only too delighted," answered Loring, watching the smoke from his cigar with his dull, brown eyes, and answering the first part of Julian's speech. "No, unfortunately I've got an affair in Chelsea to-night, and another in Kensington. But we shall meet to-morrow night at the Bracondales', I suppose?"

"Of course," assented Julian eagerly. "That will be capital!"

There was a moment's pause, broken by Loring with a reference to a political opinion formulated by one of the other men at dinner; and a talk about politics ensued, eager on Julian's part, cynical and effectively reserved on Loring's. A political discussion, when the discussers hold the same political faith, has much the same effect in promoting rapid intimacy between men, granted a predisposition towards intimacy on either side, as a discussion of the reigning fashion in dress has with a certain class of women. When Lord Garstin's dinner-party began to break up, and Loring and Julian rose to take their departure, they parted with a hand-clasp which would have befitted an acquaintanceship three months, rather than three hours old.

"Good night," said Julian. "Awfully pleased to have met you, Loring. See you to-morrow night. My mother will be delighted."

"I shall be delighted," said Loring. "All right, then. To-morrow night we'll arrange that look in at the House. Good night."

A few minutes' talk with Lord Garstin, who had taken a decided fancy to "that charming little woman's boy," and Julian was standing on the pavement of St. James's Street, with that pleasant sense of exhilaration and warmth of heart, which is an attendant in youth on the inauguration of a new friendship.

It was a night in early May, and a fine, hot day had ended, as evening drew on, in sultry closeness. The clouds had been rolling up steadily, though not a breath of air seemed to be stirring now, and it was evident that a storm was inevitable before long. Julian was hot and excited; he had only a short distance to go; he looked up at the sky and decided—the wish being father to the thought—that it would "hold up for the present," and that he would walk.

He set out up St. James's Street and along Piccadilly, taking the right road by instinct, his busy thoughts divided between

satisfaction at the idea of belonging to the "best" club in London, introduced there into by Lord Garstin, and Loring and his gifts and graces. He had just turned into Berkeley Street when a rattling peal of thunder roused him with a start, and the next instant the thunder was followed by a perfect deluge of rain.

It was so sudden and he was so entirely unprepared, that his only instinct for the moment was to step back hastily into the shelter of a portico in front of which he was just passing; and as he did so, he noticed a young woman who must have been following him up the street, a young woman in the shabby hat and jacket of a work-girl, take refuge, perforce, beneath the same shelter with a shrinking movement which was not undignified, though it seemed to imply that she was almost more afraid of him than of the drenching, bitter rain. Then, his reasoning powers reasserting themselves in the comparative security of the portico, he began to consider what he should do. He was within seven minutes' walk of his destination, but seven minutes' walk in such rain as was beating down on the pavement before him would render him wholly unfit to present himself at a party; and "of course," as he said to himself, there was not a cab to be seen. A blinding flash of lightning cut across his reflections, and drove him back a step or two farther into shelter involuntarily. And as a terrific peal of thunder followed it instantaneously, he glanced almost unconsciously at the sharer of his shelter.

"By Jove!" he said to himself.

The girl had retreated, as he himself had done, and was standing close up against the door of the house to which the portico belonged, in the extreme corner from that which he himself occupied. But except for that tacit acknowledgement of his presence, she seemed no longer conscious of it. She was looking straight out at the storm, her head a little lifted as though to catch a glimpse of the sky; and her face, outlined by her dark clothes and the dark paint of the door behind her, stood out in great distinctness. It was rather thin and pale, and very tired-looking; the large brown eyes were heavy and haggard. It was not worthy of a second glance at that moment, according to any canon of the world in which Julian lived; and yet it drew from him that exclamation of startled admiration. He had never seen anything like it, he told himself vaguely.

Apparently the intent gaze, of which he himself was hardly conscious, affected its object. She moved uneasily, and turning as if involuntarily, met his eyes.

The next instant she was moving hastily from under the portico, when the driver of a hansom cab became aware of Julian's existence, and pulled up suddenly.

"Hansom, sir?" he shouted.

"Yes!" answered Julian quickly, dashing across the drenched pavement. "Twenty-three, Berkeley Square!"

FRIENDSHIP.

THERE is no truer friendship than that which comes with marriage. Marriage should be the union of two friends. It is friendship idealised. Friendship, both in practice and in theory. One is aware that there are the cynics on the other side. So much the worse for the cynics. Because the plain fact is, that there are no truer friendships than those friendships which exist between men and women. We read, in a certain sort of fiction, of the heroine saying to her friend the hero, who is, perhaps, a little weary of platonic, "Don't let us spoil it all by marriage. Those may not be the very words she uses, but that is the sense which they convey. One can only suggest to such a heroine, if it does seem likely that marriage would spoil the relations which exist between herself and the hero, that, on the whole, it might be wiser to leave well rigidly alone, to allow things to remain as they are. But, in that case, she will scarcely realise all that friendship may be made to mean.

It is an old story which is told of the cynic, whose man-servant came to ask his leave to step round the corner to see a friend. "A friend!" exclaimed his master. "Hurry! Let us go and look at him together! I had never dreamt that there was such a thing in the world!" And though the man's master spoke, no doubt, a little wildly, the suggestion he conveyed was not, perhaps, very wide of the truth after all. Friends are few, and they are far between. Friendship, I take it, implies a community of interest. That is why I maintain that the truest friendship is that which exists between a man and his wife. Who have, or, at any rate, who should have, interests more entirely in common?

Many people talk so loosely. If their words are to be literally interpreted, some

folks have troops of friends. My friend this, that, and the other. In certain moods, some men never speak of other men without attaching to their names the prefix, friend. My friend Jones, my friend Brown. It is astonishing how quickly some men's friendships are made. In their conversation they claim as friends men with whom they have only spoken once in their lives. I know a man, a shrewd, clear-headed man he is, who addresses men whose acquaintance he has just now made, as Old friend. He always speaks of another man as "an old friend of mine." He does it, too, with cause. I have heard him taxed with the habit as being one which borders on that sort of familiarity which implies contempt. His defence was twofold. He had it that the term, old friend, was a term of honour. That no man could be an old friend, even of a burglar, unless he were a true man. That no man could feel himself insulted by the implication that he had in him the makings of a man. For my part, the defence struck me as not lacking in ingenuity, but as still not being on all points sound. For instance, if an individual of a certain sort were to address one as old friend, one might be excused for feeling tempted to knock him down. But when this ingenious gentleman went on to the second part of his defence, I am inclined to think that he had me with him altogether.

Referring to his habit of speaking of an absent person as "an old friend of mine" named Jones, or Brown, he had it that his habit of speaking of absent persons as old friends, not only kept his tongue from evil-speaking, but his thoughts from evil-thinking. If that were so, then, as I have said, he had me with him all the way. If the mere repetition of what was, after all, a formula, really did, and does, act upon him as he said it did, and does, would that more of us were fashioned in his likeness, and then what a very different world it very easily might be! Unfortunately, experience teaches us that the mention of a person who is glibly spoken of as an old friend, instead of acting as a deterrent to evil-speaking, seems very often to act as a positive incentive. The common report of the world has it that no one speaks so much ill of us as our old friends. Cynics exclaim that that is because, before all others, they know so much ill of us. Therefore, they add, there is nothing so dangerous as the thing which the world calls friendship.

Fact and theory so often disagree. There is nothing, we have been told, which is to be so much desired for a man as many friends. As a theory, this seems all right. As a fact, it is not so certain. The cynics are not without some show of reason on their side. Many men have been ruined by their friends. Not by their mere acquaintance, be it understood, but by their very friends.

What is meant by friendship? What does one wish to imply when one speaks of a friend? A dictionary gives several definitions of the two words. Of friendship it says, first and foremost, that it is "an attachment to a person, proceeding from intimate acquaintance and a reciprocation of kind offices." One may concede that such a definition, upon the whole, is fair. It defines a friend as, among other things, "one who is attached to another by affection." If that is so, and our friends are only those who love us, then it seems clear that our friends indeed are few. For myself, I am almost inclined to go so far as to doubt if one man ever loved another man—out of the books. And I will go still farther. I am disposed to maintain that it is just as well that no man ever did love another man. Love—one cannot insist upon this too often—implies self-sacrifice. Not a single, but a continual, self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice, too, of a peculiar kind. I doubt if it is good for a man to continually sacrifice himself for any other man, though that other man is the best and the noblest man that ever breathed. To even suppose such a thing, to me, seems to suppose the unnatural. There is only one person for whom a man can safely and advantageously sacrifice himself. We revert to the original proposition! Because that person is his wife. Would that husbands and wives would more commonly sacrifice themselves for one another! Their lives would be ennobled, and they would more frequently be brought to understand what friendship may be made to mean. But, were one man to begin to practise, as an article of faith, or friendship, continual self-sacrifice for any other man, one would soon have cause to fear for the man that was in him. Of course, there is one enduring consolation. No man ever did, or ever will, sacrifice himself for another man, his whole life long.

At first sight it may seem shocking to suggest that men should not sacrifice themselves for other men. You may point, say, to Sydney Carton, and exclaim what a

grand, and yet eternal, self-sacrifice was his ! I might retort that your illustration was from fiction. But I should do nothing of the kind, for I have little doubt that there have been Sydney Cartons out of fiction, many a one. I would simply say this of Sydney Carton. With him all things had gone wrong. His life was spoilt. Nothing seemed left but the drags. Those drags seemed to him of little worth. So he sacrificed them. For whom ? Was there no mention of a woman ? True, Sydney Carton died instead of another man. But not for that man's sake—for a woman's. Besides, Sydney Carton's sacrifice was the sacrifice of death. In the sense in which I am speaking, it is nothing to offer the sacrifice of death. Possibly millions of men have died for other men whom, perhaps, they have scarcely seen, and in so dying have done well. What I object to is for a man to intend to keep on living, and yet to intend to keep on sacrificing himself for another man, until, in the ordinary course of nature, he droops and dies. I doubt if it would not be almost better for such a one to make an end of it, and to die at once, while he is still a man.

Far be it from me to preach the doctrine that a man's hand should be against every other man, or, indeed, against any other man. I merely affirm that a man ought to play for his own hand. If he desires to do that properly, he will have, first of all, to realise that there are other players in the game. If he wishes to win a game worth winning, and one which it will give him satisfaction to look back upon when won, he will have, further, to realise that he must, before all other things, play fair. But, having clearly realised those two things—that there are other players in the game, and that he must play fair—he will, possibly, be something more than a man, but, probably, something very much less than a man, if he plays for anybody else's hand but his own. My own experience, such as it is, goes to teach me that a man hampers himself who joins his hand to another man's, and so takes a partner in the game. I doubt if, in that sense, as a rule, two heads are better than one. Possibly, if a weaker player joins himself to a stronger one, it may be well with the weakling—though I doubt if it will be well, even with him, in the end. How it can be well with the stronger player I fail to understand. All this is to say nothing against the thing which is, just now, so

much in the air—co-operation. A man may, perhaps, advantageously co-operate with his fellows in the purchase of groceries, or in the conduct of a business. I have never yet heard of men advantageously co-operating in the conduct of each other's lives.

It seems to me that a man can only safely have, in the dictionary sense of the word, one friend—his wife. But, of course, in this case, as in so many other cases, the dictionary sense of the word is not the colloquial sense. When, in the common conversation of the world, one speaks of friends, one intends the word friends to apply to our more or less intimate acquaintance. Ours is not an heroic world—it is as well that it is not!—and but very few people ever even attempt to realise the heroic side of friendship. In ordinary parlance, our friends are these who are on our side ; with us, not against us. Frequently, when we speak of our friends, we mean our partisans. No doubt it is convenient for a man to have his partisans. Many a one has attained to what is supposed to be success by means of his partisans. But, if you enquire into the matter, you will find that friends of this sort are friends of a rather peculiar kind. They are apt to be our modern substitutes for what, in the middle ages, were called retainers. They group themselves round an individual who stands to them in place of the old-time feudal lord. His success means their success. You see continual instances of this kind of thing, in what seems to me to be the most curious of all the curious games—the game of politics. Spouter makes a hit in what we are accustomed to hear called the political arena. Spouter begins to have friends—partisans. As Spouter continues to make hit after hit, the hybrid congregation of his friends grows larger. In such a case it is well understood that when Spouter makes his greatest hit of all and climbs—or sinks—to office, his friends will be remembered. Thus it often happens that, in his moment of success, Spouter is apt to find that his friends are not only an insufferable nuisance, but a positive peril. They are so wont to be dissatisfied with his efforts at recollection. We see this every day. The result is that their friendship is turned to fury, and they do their best, or worst, to tear him from that eminence—we will call it eminence—to which they have assisted him to climb.

There is that sort of friendship which comes from, or which, at least, begins with admiration. In this connection it is not always necessary that there should be any personal acquaintance between the several parties. It is not even indispensable that the object on which friendship is lavished, should pretend to entertain for his friends those feelings which they entertain for him. As in the case of an artist, or of what is called a literary man. Some literary friendships are as amusing as they are warm. The kind of thing to which one refers when one speaks of log-rolling, perhaps does necessitate some sort of personal connection between the high contracting persons. Spoof, a mere scribe, sends Oof, an editor, a MS., which Oof accepts. Thenceforward, as a matter of course, Spoof must audibly admire all that Oof may do. That is but the part of friendship. Mauler favourably reviews your book. In consequence of which it is your bounden duty to say a good word, and, indeed, a good many good words, for everything which Mauler writes. They say that this variety of friendship goes even farther. A, B, C, and D, being friends, combine, not only to scratch each other's backs, but, also, to scratch everybody else's face, and, if possible, to scratch out strange people's eyes. One does not say, of one's own knowledge, that this is so. But so the story goes.

Friendship, one fears, in the common acceptation of the term, is, too often, but a synonym for selfishness. It belongs to that description of gratitude which evinces a lively sense of favours to come. Hook and Crook, Bluff and Duff, who, at present, reside at that not too lively watering-place, Flashington-by-Sea, are inseparable cronies. Why? Because they are, or because they imagine themselves to be, at any rate while they continue to reside at Flashington-by-Sea, indispensable to each other's comfort. They play the same game of whist, for the same points, they feed at the same times, off the same sort of dishes, and they have about the same sort of incomes. So, since at Flashington-by-Sea, one must have some acquaintance or die, they get on very well indeed, with the help of a row or two at times. Excellent friendships, of the same kind, are made when travelling. You start on a one, two, or three months' journey, whichever you please. You meet, at the railway station, a man who is going over exactly the same ground as yourself. You chum in with

him then and there. You are scarcely ever out of each other's company during the whole of your voyaging. To the eye of an uninitiated spectator yours would seem to be a clear case of a modern version of David and Jonathan. You part at the end of the journey. You never again set eyes upon each other during the whole of the rest of your lives. And you never want to, either.

Then there are the respectable friendships—the sort of thing which you may have heard described as family feuds. Friendships of this kind are mostly to be found flourishing among what are called—we will not say ironically—county families. They are, or ought to be, hereditary. A genuine county family friendship surely never grew up in the first generation. They do take such a time to grow. In their first stages there are so many things which have to be considered. First of all, are the Brownes the sort of people one would like to know? Was Browne in a retail or in a wholesale line of trade? If the man is “awfully” rich, this question is not of so much consequence. If, on the other hand, he is only, so to speak, passably rich, retail may prove fatal. Then when one has decided to know the Brownes, there are forms and ceremonies which must be observed. “*Festina lente*” is the motto which, in these matters, county families nail to their masts. Hasten slowly, if you must hasten. Better still, do not hasten at all. You call on them, say, after they have been in the place a year, and you have made quite sure. Then they call on you. Then you invite them to dinner; then they invite you. And that brings you to the end of another year; which makes two. Thenceforward, if you feel perfectly satisfied that the Brownes are all that they ought to be, and if the Brownes are equally satisfied with respect to you, it is possible—but by no means necessarily probable—that the budding friendship will burst more rapidly into flower.

It is at this point that the county family friendship is apt to begin to take the form of a family feud. Each side stands, as it were, on tiptoe on the watch. If the Blacks give the Brownes a regular dinner—as distinct from an irregular, and, therefore, commonplace feed—the Blacks will count the hours which intervene between the giving of the banquet and the ceremonial calling of the Brownes to acknowledge the favour received. When the Brownes dine the Blacks, Mrs. Black

will not call on the Brownes within less than a fortnight. Why? Because after their very last dinner Mrs. Browne allowed thirteen days to intervene before she called on the Blacks. It sounds incredible. If that is so, like many things which do sound incredible, it is a simple statement of simple fact.

If Euphrosyne Black gets married, they may not own it, but the marriage is a bitter blow to some of the Brownes. Why? Because Euphrosyne Black is two years younger than Maria Brown, and not even a suggestion of marriage has ever come Maria's way. True, Providence may take with one hand and give with the other. The Brownes may have at least one consolation. Euphrosyne has made a shocking bad match. Poor Euphrosyne! If Maria Browne gets married after all the county family feud—that is, friendship—goes merrily on. Euphrosyne has a boy. Maria cannot even get a girl. A horrid boy, that boy of Euphrosyne's. One cannot help but notice how she always brings him with her when she comes to call upon Maria. Still a bountiful Providence does not leave Maria wholly unconsoled. Euphrosyne's husband treats her, and bids fair to keep on treating her, like the scamp he is. Actually beats her, one is told. Poor dear Euphrosyne! One can but hope that her son will not grow up in the likeness of his sire. So true it is that we are apt to find our sweetest pleasures in the afflictions of our friends.

Friendship, in the common acceptation of the word, is, too often, but a synonym for feud. A man with many friends is bound, not free. He dare not do this, that, or the other, lest he offend his friends. They, on their side, are in bondage unto him. I, for my part, love to be free. And when I see it laid down, as it was laid down by some of the scribes and the Pharisees when they were writing of the poet, who, but the other day, went unto the larger number of the singers, that it was to be counted against him almost as a crime that he should have been unwilling to make many friends, and to have personal dealings with but few acquaintances, I can but wonder. One may reckon one's friendship as of little worth, and yet desire to be free. If, when, in the judgement of the world, one has made one's friendship to be of much worth, one ceases to be free, are not the thorns too many for the crown? They tell us that nothing can be of so much service to a man as the fact of his

having many friends. Let him that thinks so surround himself with a numerous company—with an innumerable company, if he so pleases. For myself, my pea is not beneath that thimble. My faith is otherwise. I can understand the man who leads a dual life, who to-day is one of a chattering crowd, and who to-morrow can withdraw into a solitary place, where no one can intrude. But if one has to choose between the crowd and the solitude—Zimmermann, if you please, for me.

Mine should be no ungenial solitude. I would be no anchorite. The fates forefend! A casual acquaintance now and then—even a casual acquaintance with whom I may use the familiarity of a friend—but not a casual acquaintance on whose movements I should be, in any way, a tie. Nor one who, in his turn, should be a tie on me. I would have my wife to be my only friend. This may sound old-fashioned, and the cynics may scoff. Indeed, I am not so sure that this old fashion of mine is not a fashion which is always new; which, after all, is not fin-de-siècle, up to date. Did ever a man yet live, who, before he died, had not a woman for his sweetest, dearest friend? If such a one has ever been, then, verily and indeed, alas, poor man! And why should not that woman be his wife? If only now and then.

Mine is, in no sense, the voice of the preacher. *Corrente calamo*—that is how I write—with a running pen. For the writing's sake. Your morals are yours; and mine are mine.

But, I say, have clearly before you what it is that you desire that your life should be. Strive to realise your desire. Surely there is no joy like unto the joy which is born of the strife. Join unto yourself a comrade; a perfect friend. Perfect both in the colloquial and in the heroic sense of the word—a wife. I do not say that mine is an ideal to which every man, or indeed, many men, can or shall attain; else it were scarcely an ideal. But if you ask me what is my ideal of friendship, I say I think that that is mine.

SPRING IN THE SOUTH.

NOT as she comes to us

In our rough northern island, comes the spring!
With the pale primrose glimmering on her wing,
And her soft sunshine, coy and tremulous,
She wakes our England from her winter sleep,
And spreads her tender green on hill and lea,
Despite the fierce nor'-easters that will sweep
Across the uplands from the great North Sea.

Here, where Biscayan waves
Come in long rollers up the golden sand,
And from the rugged rocks and hollowed caves
Send their deep echoes o'er the mountain land,
The sunbeams dazzle downward, broad and hot,
The pine-wood's scent lies heavy on the air,
The bright flowers leap to life in glen and grot,
And April claims her empire everywhere.

High on the Spanish hills
The sunlight melts the drifts of rosy snow,
And dancing plainwards in a thousand rills
To gorse-clad moors and ferny climes they go;
White between sapphire sea and sapphire sky
Flashes the seamew on his gleaming wing;
And calling to the world triumphantly,
Swift, warm, and bounteous comes the southern
spring.

THE OUTCAST SIBERIAN LEPEES.

WE have seen something of Siberian life and travel in former numbers of this journal; but there is a unique and ghastly interest in the insight which Miss Kate Marsden has recently afforded into conditions which exist in the Asiatic dominions of the Czar. Her journey to the lepers of Northern Siberia was a notable one for anybody to make; it was especially remarkable for a woman to undertake in the depth of winter. In fact the record of that journey must always be ranked among the most memorable examples of womanly courage and devotion to the cause of humanity that the world has known.* Primarily it was undertaken to procure a herb, of which a report was current in Constantinople and elsewhere, said to possess properties to alleviate, if not to cure, leprosy, and to be found only in the far-off part of Siberia known as the province of Yakutsk. But the primary object became of secondary importance before the actual condition of the lepers in Yakutsk itself; and, indeed, although Miss Marsden does tell that she succeeded in getting a few sprigs of this mysterious herb from the Bishop of Yakutsk, she does not tell what it is, nor whether its properties have been put to a practical test. On the other hand, she has told enough of what she saw of the Siberian lepers to stir the heart of the civilised world.

It is not a cheerful subject, and Miss Marsden's acquaintance with it was made during the Turco-Russian war, when the emotions caused by the sight of two poor, mutilated, and helpless Bulgarian lepers

caused the conviction to take hold of her, that her mission in life was to minister to these miserable creatures. Before proceeding to Siberia to discover the herb of which she had heard, she went to study leprosy both at Jerusalem and at Constantinople. Then, crossing the Black Sea and the Caucasus, she made her way to Moscow towards the end of 1890, and at Moscow spent some time among the leper hospitals, and in enlisting the sympathy and help of officials and others in the work she was undertaking.

It is but right to say that, from the Empress downwards, Miss Marsden received both kindness and material aid; and yet it cannot but strike one as remarkable that nothing should have been done to grapple with the monstrous evils which—in official circles, at any rate—were quite well known to exist, until an English "sister"—for Miss Marsden is a member of the Royal British Nurses' Association—came to show them the way. Russian sympathy and professions of gratitude to the plucky Englishwoman strike one as rather "cheap" in the circumstances.

Letters of introduction and permits were obtained, and stores were purchased—including forty pounds of plum-pudding—and at the beginning of February, 1891, Miss Marsden started, accompanied by Miss Ada Field, who, however, broke down under the hardships of the road long before Yakutsk was reached, and had to return. The railway was utilised from Moscow to Zlatoust, where the long sledge journey began, not without difficulty, however, of a comical sort, the result of the mountain of furs, rugs, and wrappings in which the travellers had encased themselves for a Siberian drive.

"That sledge—one of the elevated kind, standing a long way from the ground—had to be mounted. The feat must be accomplished somehow. How I managed to walk or totter down the steps of the station without an accident is a marvel. Having got over that portion of the feat, I stood at the side of the sledge trying to solve the knotty problem of how to get in. There was no step to help me, and there was the crowd of men, women, and children gazing at me. What was I to do? I tried to take in the humour of the situation, which was probably the wisest thing to do under the circumstances. Three muscular policemen attempted to lift me gently into the sledge; but their com-

* "On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers." By Kate Marsden, F.R.G.S., etc. Published by the Record Press, Ltd., 376, Strand.

bined strength was futile under the load, so they had to set me on the ground again. Then I attempted, in a kind of majestic, contemptuous way, to mount without assistance; but, alas! my knees would not bend. My pride had to succumb; I was helpless. Two policemen came and essayed another manœuvre. They took me by the arms, and then, at their signal, I made one desperate, frantic effort, and I was in. But what a falling-off, to be sure, for one who was known to have come with a letter from the Empress—the importance of which can only be truly fathomed by a Russian—to be quizzed and stared at by the crowd whilst engaged in these undignified operations! But all was not yet over. I was in, but I had to be packed and stowed away. The men pushed, and pulled, and dragged, and coaxed, and at last I and my clothes were considered ready for starting. As to bowing and thanking my assistants, that was impossible. I just sat and fairly gasped, and longed to get away. My friend, Miss Field, underwent an ordeal somewhat similar to the one which I had endured. The driver and the soldier took their seats, and then we were off."

But if the start was fun the journey itself was not, as all can well understand who know, or have read, anything of the conditions of Siberian travel. Here is a fair specimen of it:

"Bump, jolt, bump, jolt, over large lumps of frozen snow, and into holes, and up and down those dreadful waves and furrows made by the traffic—such is the stimulating motion you have to submit to for a few thousand miles. Your head seems to belong to every part of the sledge; it is first bumped against the top, then the conveyance gives a lurch and you get an unexpected knock against the side, then you cross one of the ruts, and first you are thrown violently forward against the driver, and second, you just as quickly rebound. This sort of motion is all very well for a few miles; but after a time it gets too monotonously trying. You ache from head to foot, you are bruised all over, your poor brain throbs until you give way to a kind of hysterical outcry, your headgear gets displaced, your temper naturally becomes slightly ruffled, and you are ready to gasp from so frequently clutching at the sides to save yourself. Added to all this is the constant yelling of the driver, who thinks it one of the paramount duties of his calling to make a noise above the ringing of the

allege-bells. So you go on merrily, the horses dashing along like the steeds in a fire-engine, or like the hot-blooded beauties of Phæthon. . . . Night comes on apace to soften your feelings with a lowered temperature, and the pleasing suggestions that darkness brings. Still on you go merrily, but oh, for five minutes' peace! Bumping, jolting, tossing, heaved, pitched, and thumped. Bright memories of asphalt, blockwood, and penny omnibuses spring up to diversify your thoughts. Little gleams of light which you pass on your way, seem to come from tiny hut windows in the forest.

"Driver' (yemstchick), shouts your companion, 'can't we stop a minute at one of those huts?'

"Eh, what, madam!'

"Those huts where the lights are—can't we rest there?'

"Lights? They're wolves!'

"Oh!'

"You know you can't go faster, or you would certainly urge the driver to quicken the pace . . . until at last at the post station you pull up sharp. You are then, in a semi-comatose state, dragged from the sledge, and on gaining a footing, you feel more like a battered old log of mahogany than a gentle-nurtured Englishwoman."

And the post stations! The very description of them alone—the dirt, the discomfort, the crowd of miscellaneous unkempt humanity, the fetid atmosphere—is enough to quench any thirst one may previously have had for a tour in Siberia. A pleasant break, however, is found at Ekaterinberg, where is an excellent American hotel, and where also were some English friends. From Ekaterinberg a run of one hundred miles is made to Irbit for the purpose of interviewing a Yakutsk merchant at the fair there, about the lepers. This merchant refused to believe it possible that any woman could proceed to his district, but he supplied needful information, although he knew nothing about the herb. Then came some more terribly rough sledging to Tiumen, with awkward trouble with a still rougher driver; and at Tiumen there is again a pleasant English welcome.

During this long, monotonous, and toilsome drive across Siberia, Miss Maraden visited many of the prisons en route, and never passed a gang of convicts on the road without alighting to give them a word of comfort, and small gifts of tea and sugar. Poor wretches! they are not much

used to kindness, and must have regarded with almost awestruck wonder this strange vision of an Englishwoman breaking on them in the wilderness like a gleam of sunlight. We need not dwell on Miss Marsden's experience of Siberian prisons, as this subject has been so fully discussed of late, but hurry on with her towards the Arctic zone, the frost-bound province of Yakutsk.

The city of Irkutsk was safely reached through all the perils of the way, and here a short stay had to be made to interview the Governor-General of Siberia, and to organise a committee of influential merchants and others in support of the mission to the lepers. Then, all arrangements being completed, the journey was resumed to Yakutsk—reputed the coldest place in the world, where for eight months in the year the mean temperature marks forty-five degrees of frost, and where the ground is frozen to a depth of thirty feet, but where also the heat in summer is so great that myriads of mosquitoes and flies infest the air to the torture of both man and beast, and the agony of the sore-covered lepers. In this awful region, when once a man is tainted with leprosy, or even suspected of taint, he is driven forth into some lonely forest or desolate marsh to live a living death. A wife, a mother, a son, a daughter, are subject to the same fate the moment the fatal symptom of disease appears. All hope must those abandon on whom is found the dreaded sign.

The victim knows that never again will he see a kind face or hear a loving word, and that he may have to pass, perhaps, fifteen or twenty years as a loathed outcast. He finds a shelter—if he can—in some filthy little hut which some former victim has occupied, only to vacate with death, outside of which he must erect a cross to warn every one to shun the spot. The awfulness and misery of such a life in such a climate can hardly be realised.

Between St. Petersburg and Yakutsk are almost five thousand miles of road, and we have seen how most of it had to be traversed. When the snows melted, the sledge had to be abandoned for a tarantass, or springless cart, and in a tarantass the journey was made from Irkutsk to Yakutsk, which was reached in June, 1891.

The province of Yakutsk, in the far north-east of Siberia, covers an area of about two and a half million square miles, and contains a population of about two

hundred and fifty thousand, of which about sixteen thousand are Russians, and the rest Yakuts and various nomadic tribes. It is divided for administrative purposes into five circuits, the chief centre of which is the town of Yakutsk on the River Lena. This is a dreary, dead-alive place of about seven thousand inhabitants, where, in winter, the cold is so intense that the people cannot go out of doors at all, and spend their days in smoking and playing cards. Here resides the Bishop of Yakutsk, described as a noble, earnest man, devoted to his work, and much interested in the redemption of the lepers. He had some specimens of the mysterious herb, but could give no information about its curative or alleviative properties.

It was not in the town of Yakutsk, however, that the lepers could be seen, but in the Viluiak Circuit, a district of intense poverty, and where even yet heathen practices prevail. To reach Viluiak meant another journey of two thousand miles, this time on horseback—perhaps still more trying for a woman unused to horses, who, for security of tenure over a roadless country, was perforce obliged to sit man-wise. The cavalcade consisted of fifteen men and thirty horses, carrying stores for the party and lepers, and appliances for camping-out.

"We rode in single file, and when the Yakut's (guide) horse in front partly disappeared, we knew there were bogs ahead, and must therefore pick another way. As a rule, it was quite impossible to know where one was going. On the borders of the forest we camped for the night. Fires were lighted, tents pitched, tea handed round, horses unloaded and tethered, and then we retired. At the side of each member of the cavalcade lucky enough to possess a revolver or gun the weapon lay ready in case of emergencies, the said emergencies referring chiefly to bears. Some men were placed as sentries, and also to keep up the fires."

Fancy a woman alone in such circumstances for weeks together, alternately stifled with heat and soaked with rain, without even the possibility of the relief to be found in "a good cry"!

Viluiak was reached at last, and one of the first things to do was to consult with the missionary priest about the best site for the leper hospital which Miss Marsden proposed to establish. Here some frightful things are learned, not only about the lepers, but also about the crimes

committed in the name of leprosy, for it seems that when once any one has been proclaimed a leper, all right to property passes away from him. It is easy to imagine what opportunity for fraud and cruelty is thus presented. Here also one learns how lepers may become utterly demoralised by men, women, and children herding together, like brutes, in the same filthy "yourtas," as the huts of Yakutsk are called. Then a plunge is made into the forest to see the lepers themselves.

After miles of riding, "At last I thought I could discern ahead a large lake, and beyond that two yourtas. My instinct was true to me, and the peculiar thrill which passed through my whole frame meant that after all these months of travelling I had found, thank God, the poor creatures whom I had come to help. A little more zigzag riding along the tedious path, and then I suddenly looked up and saw before me the two yourtas and a little crowd of people. Some of the people came limping and some leaning on sticks to catch the first glimpse of us, their faces and limbs distorted by the dreadful ravages of the disease. One poor creature could only crawl by the help of a stool, and all had the same indescribably hopeless expression of the eyes which indicates the disease. I scrambled off the horse, and went quickly amongst the little crowd of the lame, the halt, and the blind. Some were standing, some were kneeling, and some crouching on the ground, and all with eager faces turned towards me. They told me afterwards that they believed God had sent me. I at once ordered the things to be unpacked and had them collected on the grass. A prayer of thanksgiving was then offered by the priest and next a prayer for Her Imperial Majesty the Empress, in which the poor people heartily joined. As we distributed the gifts some of the distorted faces half beamed with delight, whilst others changed from a look of fear to one of confidence and rest. Surely such a scene was worth a long journey, and many hardships and perils."

The yourtas in which these poor creatures live are small huts into which the light never penetrates, in which the atmosphere is saturated with the exhalations of rotten fish (and flesh), in which the lepers have neither beds nor linen, and have nothing but ragged skins to cover them—if, indeed, they are fortunate enough to possess even these. In these foul places, swarming with vermin, the lepers sleep and eat—

when they have anything to eat—live, and die. And when they die they are buried just outside the threshold.

Living in such a colony Miss Marsden found a girl of eighteen, perfectly free from the disease, who had been born after her mother was cast out as infected, and who had thus lived all her life under such horrible conditions—for neither Russians nor Yakuts would allow her, clean though she was, to come near them. It is pleasant to learn that Miss Marsden induced one heroic official to smother his prejudices and agree to take the poor girl into his house as a servant.

Further in the forest is encountered a solitary frightened being in rags, who had lived for years all alone in his misery. Then another settlement of twelve men, women, and children scantily clothed in filthy rags, huddled together in two small, vermin-infested yourtas. The stench was dreadful. One man was dying; two men had lost their toes and half of their feet, and had fastened boards to their knees so that they might crawl along, and one man had no fingers. Their filthy rags had stuck to the sores on their bodies and caused them intense irritation. They had also suffered during winter from typhus fever and small-pox.

A dreadful instance of what lepers have sometimes to suffer is related. A leper woman was placed in a yourta with a leper man who went mad. For four years she had to live with this madman in the depth of the forest, never sure of her life from one hour to another, and without hope of human help by night or by day—nothing but the pathless forest around her.

Again, a settlement of nine lepers—two women, one man, and two children among them without any clothes at all. For the winter they had but a few rags and a little hay to protect them from the deadly frosts. In the summer time the flies were tormenting their open wounds until they writhed in agony.

But one cannot go on. These are but a few samples of the terrible, horrible things Miss Marsden saw. "Small-pox, measles, scarlet fever," say the natives, "are appointed by God, but leprosy by the devil." And awful is the treatment meted out to those unhappy enough to be smitten with the plague. No wonder that the poor creatures blessed the coming of the Englishwoman, and besought her with tears to lose no time in establishing the hospital-colonies she told them she had come to

prepare for their relief. No wonder that woman herself broke down for a time with utter exhaustion of mind and body.

All this exists in Holy Russia—and we have told not one-half of what Miss Marsden saw, and she even has not told all—and for generations has been known, officially known, to exist. Whatever is being done now for the relief of this vast sum of human misery is the work of a brave and tender-hearted Englishwoman, of whom her countrymen may well be proud. Not content with what she has done in Yakutsk, Miss Marsden is now bent on a mission to the lepers in far-off Kamtschatka.

SQUATTER LIFE.

How familiar to us all are the combined letters, "V. R."! They flourish on the postal vans, they greet us from the signboards of royal tradesmen, they head the proclamations by means of which Her Majesty's subjects are informed of the advantages to be gained by joining some one or other of Tommy Atkins's numerous companies.

But there are circumstances under which their very familiarity makes the presence of these letters appear the more strange. Suppose, for instance, that you board an ocean liner, steam in an easterly direction half round the globe—it will take you about seven weeks to do it—land, travel by rail for some hours, and when the terminus is reached, on again by coach for a couple of days longer, and then look about you, in what kind of place do you find yourselves? Well, if you have happened to see representations of the moon's scenery by the aid of photographic slides and a magic lantern, I dare say you may have had some idea of the existence of such a country before. To be sure there is here the important addition of water; but the volcanic formation, the barrenness, the desolation of loneliness, even the atmosphere which is so dry and so clear that surrounding objects have the crispness of outline of a no-atmosphere, all these are moonlike in aspect.

On every side of you rise up mountains, dark, precipitous, snow-capped; and, although you are in New Zealand, the land of the bush, for the last hundred miles, except where a few gum-trees have grown up about a station homestead, you have not set eyes upon a single tree. This is,

in fact, a region which is appropriately spoken of as "rough country," a region where a horse will plunge without hesitation into a rushing stream, but will seriously demur about crossing a bridge—no doubt because with bridges his ancestors were unacquainted; where a poor man and hungry will turn in disgust from a dead rabbit as from a thing accursed—and indeed, who is to certify that it has no poisoned grain in its stomach?—but will deftly bake his own damper, and with the most primitive of culinary apparatus will do to a nicety the chop you have given him.

A strange country this into which you have penetrated. But turn your eyes for a moment to the wooden hut before which your coach has pulled up. You will observe the word "Store," carefully painted in large capitals above the door, and on one side, let into the wall, a metal plate with the ordinary oblong opening for letters in the centre, and to right and left the magic symbols "V. R." There they are, sure enough. They beam upon you with the welcome of old friends; it had never occurred to you before, probably, to regard them in that light, but all of a sudden you have learnt that that is what they are.

After all, then, you are still in Her Majesty's dominions. Loyal subjects you will find, too, about you. Make your way to the large verandahed wooden building in front of you—the dwelling-house it is of a great station—dine with the family, and you may be sure you are kindly welcome, and after the meal is over you will notice a silence fall on the company. Then little Phoebe, the darling of the household, a child in her fourth year, will stand up solemnly, holding her teacup in her hand—of course everybody has been supplied with tea along with the first course. "The 'Peen,' God bless her," she says softly, and each individual at table takes a sip of the innocent beverage.

You can scarcely have got so far inland as this, however, without finding some features of interest in the journey. It may be that you have met a couple of caravans, fourteen bullocks to the team, wending their slow, slow, monotonous way along; and if you have happened to remark on the picturesqueness of the sight, or have admired the driver's deft manipulation of the stock whip, it is ten to one that the coach jehu will have given you a yarn to the point. There is a story of a New Zealand bishop who tried to dissuade the driver of a bullock team from swearing

by insisting that the beasts would work just as well if spoken to in ordinary language.

"Then you speak to them," says the man.

"Jean, pretty Jean, gee up," murmurs the bishop pleasantly, stroking the flanks of the nearest animal.

No movement.

"Come, come, Jean! Poor old Jean!"

Dead pause.

"Jean, Jean, gee up, Jean!" Tones getting louder: "Gee up, Jean, will you! Gee up! Gee up! Gee up!"

Silence and exasperation.

"Confound you, Jean, gee up!"

And Jean makes one step forward, on which the bishop turns sharp away, ashamed of his partial success and the reason for it.

The road at short intervals is traversed by creeks, and whenever the teams reach one of these the bullocks of both are employed to drag one caravan across. Hence the explanation of their travelling in pairs.

"What are the creeks called?" you may have asked. Why, the Otematata, the Ohauriri, the Otematapayo, the Omarama. Maori words all, of course; and the meanings? Well, they all have some, as, for instance, Omarama, moon, moonlike, clear as the moon. The great glacier river, along the course of which the road has led you all the long day, is called the Waitaki, i.e., Singing Waters or Waters of Lamentation. Wide it is to the extent sometimes of a quarter of a mile, and correspondingly swift. If you wish to cross over, Hermann Max, the boatman—a German who has completely forgotten his native language without properly learning any other—will row you over, taking you if you like down the rapids, when you will learn the meaning of the words "the boatie rows," supposing you may never have put to sea in a small boat in your life. If you are well-advised, you will make the return journey after night-fall, when you can lean back and fix your gaze on "the spacious firmament on high." Are there ever such clear nights in the Northern Hemisphere, with such a multiplicity of stars showing? I think hardly. The Southern Cross, to be sure, is a fraud, inasmuch as it is scarcely brighter or more noticeable than its neighbours, and has probably only had its claims advanced in opposition to our own worthy Plough; but the brilliancy of the heavens in these

regions is certainly incontestable. Lean back, I say, and look up while the Singing Waters sound their lullaby close to your ears, and Hermann directs his little craft towards the dark shore, guided by the beacon-light of your buggy lantern, which flickers waveringly from the summit of the high bank.

Ah, these clear, dry nights, and these blue, blue skies by day! Too often in these parts they mean ruin, or, as he more forcibly puts it, ruination to the squatter.

It is the end of July, and they are still in the depths of winter. All over the hills the piled-up snows have been lying for, say, four weeks. Morning, noon, and night the station owner is watching for any symptoms of an abatement of the ruinous frost, for some sign of coming moisture, let it be but a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. But no; every evening the stars seem to be brighter, every day the turquoise of the heavens more transparent. Well might he say with Madame de Staël, "A sky all blue; a sky without masses of light and shade, of sunshine and darkness. Alas! how sad and melancholy is such a sky!" His sheep are dying by inches, dying in thousands, and he cannot stretch out a hand to help them. The snow lies between them and their food, scanty at best during this time of the year. For three weeks, if they are closely huddled together, they may exist practically without nourishment; then the weaker must go to the wall. Some have fallen down ere now, and are too much exhausted to pick themselves up; they may linger on a week in that posture enduring the pangs of slow starvation.

Every time the squatter goes out for a walk he will come across some dead sheep. In the nearest paddock are located the old rams, and these are amongst the earliest victims. There they lie with their faces skywards, their great twisted, coiled horns partially embedded in the snow, and a bleat, mute now, but eloquent, frozen on their open mouths.

It is a heartrending sight. There is almost nothing to be done. A few of the fallen ones may be sought out and set on their legs; one or two that have got entangled in the prickly scrub may be freed; but the station is a large one; it stretches back across mountainous ridges—some of the summits seven or eight thousand feet in height—for perhaps thirty miles, and it seems almost useless to attempt to find

them. Sixpence a skin is being paid to the station hands for every sheepskin brought in; the carcasses, of course, are quite valueless.

Nor is the squatter the only anxious watcher of King Frost. Scattered over the Run are some thirty rabbiters, who came up country four weeks ago in joyous expectation of a good harvest. The ground, they knew, was riddled with rabbit-holes; they would be paid three half-pence a skin; their fortunes were as good as made.

So they formed into "crowds," five or six men in each, and camped out in tents, at the entrances to which they built up carefully their fireplaces and chimneys, preparing to set to work in good earnest. And lo! down came the snow, softly, softly falling in great fleecy flakes steadily on for three whole days. No use scattering the poisoned grain now, only to see it sink through the earth's white mantle; they must simply bide their time. But four long weeks have passed by, and their time has not yet come.

Most of them have got frozen out of the tents, and have taken refuge at the homestead in the shearers' hut. Look in upon them there some evening; you will find it well worth your while. The bunks are placed in tiers, one above another, as in a steamer state-room, only instead of two tiers there are three. Here and there a man is reclining in one of these, reading well-thumbed newspapers by the light of a candle-end which he has stuck on the wooden edge of the bunk. Some are smoking and gossiping by the fireside, perpetually heaping on fuel the while, for the wood is mere scrub wood, green, and hardly to be induced to keep alight, and the pieces of corady—the withered ebon stems of the flax plant flower—though quick to blaze up, are almost as quick in burning themselves out. Two or three groups are immersed in cribbage, the standard card game of the colonials. Their cribbage-boards are characteristic, bars of yellow soap, with the requisite number of holes neatly punched upon the surface.

What a heterogeneous collection of faces! Poverty does indeed make strange bed-fellows. These men, whom necessity has drawn so close together, are sprung from many and divers ranks of society. One has been bred a lawyer, the second is the only child of a clergyman, a third, the offspring of an Irish emigrant, knows neither how to read nor write; but for

physical endurance and keenness in tracking master bunny he can beat the lot of them. The son of an Earl got amongst them one year. His comrades heard him called Lord Siltou, took it for a nickname, appreciated the joke—for the youth had certainly the aristocratic "tournure"—and persistently gave him his title throughout the period of their associated residence.

Well, these rabbiters, whom you have been observing so carefully, are, in spite of their apparent cheerfulness, up to the eyes in debt. For four weeks—ever since they came up, in fact—they have been living on credit. The storekeeper at the nearest township has supplied them with all the necessaries of life, and in order to pay him, they must hand over all the rabbit skins that they will have time to get hold of before they are themselves sent off down country. The season, in fact, has been a bad one.

Jack O'Halligan, the odd man at the station, has also suffered from the weather. Great heavens, how he has suffered! A man with only one lung left him rising at five in the morning to milk the cow, sent off twenty miles to Horse Shoe Bend for a load of lignite when he ought to be lying in bed in a hospital! But Jack will never give in; far more likely he will die game at his post. Jack's toilet, not an elaborate one, was till recently conducted in the open air. From your bedroom window in the station dwelling-house you can see the water conduit—now frozen fast—in which he performed his slight ablutions, and the willow-tree from which are suspended by pieces of string his towel and his comb. The towel is now as stiff as a coating of ice can make it, and the query which naturally suggests itself is, Are the ablutions dispensed with altogether nowadays? Jack says his prayers still, anyhow, for you will see him frequently cross himself in the midst of his work. He carries a boiled egg, poor man, in each pocket by which he occasionally warms his hands. Poor Jack! Poor old Jack!

Speaking of eggs recalls what these severe frosts have been doing. It is this: Several eggs brought in recently have had their shells cracked by the frost, and the aperture has revealed the contents in a frozen condition, resembling, in fact, very pure white pounded sugar. It is not often that you will have had a chance of seeing curiosities of this sort in the old country.

But all this freezing talk is enough to chill the marrow in one's bones, I hear you

say. Well, another time we may take a peep at this same region when the yellow tussock is burnt to a rich sienna with the sun's hot rays, and when you dare not lay hold of a boulder on the hillside for the fear of having your skin frizzled. Or shall we rather seek the magic letters in some "land where it seems always afternoon," where none but the balmiest of spicy breezes have ever yet been known to blow? Be assured there are many such favoured spots in which they gleam triumphant; nor is our boast a vain one when we say that the sun never sets in Her Majesty's dominions.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII. TRIUMPH.

"My dear Henry, you are too romantic," said Mrs. Cantillon.

It was an October afternoon in London. The day had been dark and foggy, but was brightening as the sun descended into that atmosphere of dim red gold which shows London at its most beautiful. Two happy people were driving in a hansom from Piccadilly to the Stores. They had been abroad, Poppy Latimer with them, for many weeks, and had only returned to England the day before. The Rector was rejoicing at the thought of seeing his books and his garden again. He had not felt it quite right to be away so long from Bryans; but his wife had pointed out to him that Poppy's return there must be painful, and had better be delayed till summer was fully over, and the aspect of the place changed.

Poppy was ready to resign herself patiently to all that they suggested. She was very quiet, generally cheerful, and amused with little things. Her aunt thought that time was doing its work more quickly than could have been expected, and already a crowd of new plans floated before her lively brain. Because it was so evidently impossible that Poppy should live on long alone and unmarried at Bryans!

She did not find her husband very sympathetic as to these plans. To him it seemed that the arrangement of Poppy's life was a sphere of thought and action where angels might fear to tread; neither

was he contented as to Poppy's present state of mind. She did not seem to him quite alive. It was unnatural that she should leave everything to her aunt and himself, having apparently lost all will of her own. He felt instinctively, much more than his wife did, though she had suffered enough at the time, that Poppy's life had literally been broken in two. It seemed to him that no amount of careful consideration and tenderness could make up for the terrible disillusion to which such an honest and loving heart had been condemned. How could it be expected that Poppy would ever trust in the promises of life and of her fellow-creatures again? Who could ever mend such a breakage, or bring her back to the fulness of life she had lost? It was all very well to enjoy foreign shops, to admire lakes and mountains, to talk pleasantly to fellow-travellers. Poppy could smile; she could even echo her aunt's merry little laugh sometimes; but to the Rector there was something behind this which gave him a strange feeling in his throat, and made him stare very hard into a distant corner; and he did not at all share his wife's happy conviction that one of these days Poppy would marry some nice sensible man, and all the past would be as if it had never been.

The evening before, soon after their arrival, having established his wife and Poppy in the quiet hotel near Piccadilly where they meant to spend the next few days, Mr. Cantillon had gone out for a walk. In Regent Street he had met Geoffrey Thorne, whom he believed to be still abroad, and heard from him that he had given up art, and was going out to America to look for a post on a farm. He was to sail the next day but one. He had said good-bye to them at home. When was he coming back? Never.

The Rector had laughed at this and remarked that America was next-door. They had walked up and down for an hour, talking over past, present, and future. Geoffrey's tone was depressed and low, he confessed himself beaten; he was tired of this dull old world. The Rector asked so many questions that Geoffrey's own only came as they parted. "How is Miss Latimer?"

Then the Rector said what he dared not repeat to his wife, and in fact remembered himself with some trepidation, but the feeling that prompted the words was too strong for him.

"Come and see for yourself, Geoffrey.

Come and dine with us at the hotel to-morrow night."

Geoffrey hastily refused. He did not think he could. Possibly he might call, just for the chance of seeing Mr. Cantillon again, of saying good-bye.

Mr. Cantillon thought over this a good deal, but it was not till he was driving off with Fanny to the Stores that he told her of the meeting and the possible visit.

"Dear me!" she said. "He may come while we are out."

"Well, he will probably ask for me, and he won't force himself in; and yet, upon my word, worse things might happen than his having an interview with Poppy."

"My dear Henry, you are too romantic. It would only be rather awkward and painful, so far as I can see."

"That depends," said Mr. Cantillon oracularly.

"I don't understand you."

"Well, don't be angry with me, and don't describe me as 'romantic,' because I am speaking only the plainest, saddest matter-of-fact. I am very sorry for Porphyria. My heart aches for her, poor girl. I am often struck by her loneliness, a person who, more than any other I could name, deserves 'honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.' Here she is left with no one. Lover and friend, you see, have alike deserted her——"

"Come, Henry"—his wife interrupted him with a touch of impatience—"she has you and me."

"In a way, yes. But neither you nor I belong to her as we belong to each other."

"That is only saying that Poppy is not married. Well, of course, I want her to be married. One of these days the right man will come forward, you will see."

"Ah! Perhaps so. But are you quite sure that the prejudices of society are not leading us to ignore the right man—to refuse to see him while he stands at our elbow? I only ask the question."

"My dearest Henry, you are absolutely too ridiculous!"

"Am I?"

"Yes, you are. Do you know that you are talking nonsense when you give these hints about a person who is quite impossible—entirely out of the question? And you know all that as well as I do. So what is the use of making me nervous?"

"If only Geoffrey Thorne's relations

did not live at Bryans," the Rector responded, a little roused by his wife's tone, "I should say that such a marriage would be by no means out of the question. As I told you some time ago, I have known all about him for a year. If ever a man loved a woman truly he loves Porphyria. He is a man of high and generous character, by no means without talent, with the manners and tastes and ways of a gentleman. Many women in her position have married men inferior to him in every way."

"Ob, Henry, Henry, what nonsense!" cried Mrs. Cantillon, now really distressed. "Tell the man to turn round, please. You frighten me so that I dare not leave Poppy alone."

"No, no," he said, smiling, and laying his hand on hers. "There is no danger, you know. For Poppy's sake I almost wish there was. From his manner last night I don't think he is the least likely to come. And if he does, the poor soul has no presumption, and Miss Porphyria's views of her dignity are likely to accord with yours, not mine. She is not likely to change her esteem of Geoffrey, as a humble servant and nothing more. She knows nothing about him—never did—does not care to. He is nothing to her."

"That is very true. Poppy has more sense than you, dear," said Mrs. Cantillon, comforted.

They drove on in the dim, glowing atmosphere, past lines of trees from which the yellow leaves were already dropping fast.

In the meanwhile, Poppy lay back in a deep crimson arm-chair in their hotel sitting-room, reading a letter which the waiter had brought to her soon after they started. There was not much light in the room, shaded as it was by high houses opposite and made gloomy in itself by dark tints and heavy curtains and furniture. The Rector's books and Aunt Fanny's trifles lay about on tables and sofa. There were two windows, and Poppy sat near the farther one, a pale suffusion of light illuminating her face—the face of a person who has had a great shock—and making the soft masses of her bright hair shine. What she read in the letter seemed only to add a kind of bewilderment to the sadness in her eyes; and yet, perhaps, it was not only the afternoon light which gave them their brilliant beauty. And it is the truth that when she read the letter first, she smiled in spite of herself, though an instant after

her pretty mouth fell back into lines of melancholy coldness.

No one was there to see; she was bound by no outside considerations; and, after all, the letter brought her no fresh news. Like many such letters, it had been written at midnight, copied over and over again, carried about till the writer at last let it slip from his fingers; and the only wonder was that a piece of his life, such as he felt it to be, could lie so quiet in Poppy's hand, could be studied so calmly, almost wearily, without any response but a faint, fast-dying smile, a moment's excitement which made her heart beat a little faster and her eyes shine. The letter did not begin in a very lover-like manner.

"DEAR MISS LATIMER,—I met Mr. Cantillon last night, and he told me that you are in London. I cannot help saying good-bye to you before leaving England for ever, and I only dare do it in this way, though he told me I might come and see you. I don't want to trouble you with any of my history, which has been failure all round, as you know. I have little to leave or regret on this side of the Atlantic, except one thing which I shall take with me, my love and adoration for you. For longer than I can tell you my life has been yours, quite useless to you, I know. I only wish it could have been laid down between you and any trouble ever so small. You know all this already, and you may think me bold and troublesome for telling you in words, but now that I know you are near it is impossible not to speak, and it is the last chance and the last time. I don't ask for any answer, unless out of your goodness you will send me a kind word to take with me. You know that in this life I can never love any woman but you, and I would rather know that, as things are, than have all the world could give me in any other way. My love is yours, my life is yours, body and soul are yours—all useless to you, but I have nothing else to offer. And so now, good-bye. May Heaven bless you and make you happy.—Your faithful servant,

"GEOFFREY THORNE."

Poppy read the letter three or four times through. Then she laid it down, her hands still resting on it, and turning her head a little on the broad back of the chair, gazed out of the window up into

the smoky glimmer of sky. Yes, there was one person who loved her, one person who had always been faithful. Yes, this man had loved her all her life, and everything he had done, even the things she had least understood at the time, had been done in her service. Looking back, she could now see how he must have suffered, first from her blindness, later from her selfishness. Well! Poor Geoffrey Thorne. She was glad he had not come; that would have been painful. Yes, she would certainly write to him, answer his letter, and as kindly as she could. She would try somehow to make him understand that this unselfish affection of his was very valuable to her—yes, indeed, very valuable now, now that her world had crumbled to ashes round her. That would go without saying, but might be understood. Geoffrey was too honest, too humble, too good, to exaggerate anything she might say. As for any pride of her own, any thought of being pitted by an inferior, she was too tired, too indifferent, for it to show itself at all.

"Yes, I will write to him," she thought; but still she lay back dreaming in the great red chair, the same, yet a strange contrast with the Poppy of last year and her matter-of-fact serenity; the old shadow about her mouth deepened to reality, while her eyes spoke of a feeling that was new, painful, and sweet.

"No matter who it is, I'm glad to know that somebody cares for me still."

Then she took up the letter and read it again, and now a faint colour rose in her cheeks, and the words seemed like living things laying hold upon her, and it dawned rather suddenly on her not very clear-sighted mind that this would be a difficult letter to answer. Then other thoughts came thronging, of what nature she never quite knew, for before they had at all arranged themselves, there was a knock at the door, and the waiter, coming noiselessly in, asked her if she would see Mr. Thorne.

"Yes," she said with perfect coolness. "Ask Mr. Thorne to come in."

She rose from her chair and came forward to meet Geoffrey, letting his letter fall. At first it seemed as if she had not read it, or had forgotten it already, so quiet and unconcerned was her manner. Only as they stood together between the round table and the window it was suddenly impossible for either of them to speak, and then Miss Latimer of Bryans knew that she was blushing crimson, and

was just as embarrassed as any schoolgirl. She recovered herself instantly, however, and retreated to her former place by the window, while Geoffrey stood very gravely and quietly looking at her.

"My aunt and Mr. Cantillon are out," she began in a low voice.

"I know," he said. "I beg your pardon, I asked for you. Will you forgive me—please—do you forgive me? I could not help coming."

Poppy sat looking down, for it was absolutely impossible to meet his eyes just then. She had known before that they could speak, but their eloquence now was altogether a new experience, and rather affected the calmness she felt to be so desirable.

"I had your letter. I was going to write to you," she murmured.

"Were you? That was very good of you; but, you see, I could not wait. The boat leaves earlier than I thought, and I must go to Liverpool to-night. If you had written to that address your letter would have been lost. I thought you would speak to me instead."

Poppy sat still, trying to think. What had she meant to say in her letter? Would it be possible to say it in words? Well, to begin with, she could not remember—and then, whatever it was, she felt that it must have been futile and inadequate. Kindness was out of place, gratitude was absurd. If love cannot answer love, absolute coldness is best. And Poppy felt that instinctively. But she felt, too, that coldness here was impossible.

"I am so sorry," she said, so low that he could hardly hear her.

"No, dear," he answered in the same low tone, "don't be sorry. You are not hurting me, you know—and you can't kill what has never lived."

She did not understand him, and perhaps he saw this.

"I came to-day," he said, hesitating—it was so hard to keep a strong control over himself—"chiefly because I couldn't keep away—but that is a reason which concerns me, not you—and partly to ask your pardon for writing that letter. I have no possible excuse for plaguing you with it. You never gave me the smallest hope—even long ago—I have never had the least right or claim. So you can't take away hope you have never given, and nothing you can say or do will ever alter the rest, you know. Don't look unhappy. When I knew you were here, I simply

could not go without seeing you once again. Now you know everything—do not be angry."

The street was full of noise, but round these two for the next minute there reigned silence which might have been that of the deserts of Arabia. Geoffrey's voice, as it died in the ugly commonplace room, left its echo of a man's pleading for his life, for more than life. While asking for nothing, he was praying for everything. All the romance of his nature, all the love in his heart, were laid at Poppy's feet once for all then. The passion of his voice and eyes, though so quiet and restrained, must have touched and stirred the hardest-hearted of women. Perhaps there was some pity for herself, too, in the thrill that brought tears to Poppy's eyes when he was silent. She leaned her head on her hand to shade her eyes from him, looking down on the floor, and he saw how thin her hand was, and how blue the veins on her white temples, and remembered, among past scenes, how she had stood beside him in the old turret at Herzheim, not much more than a year ago—remembered her serene brightness and perfect health, her ignorance of pain and sorrow, the kindness which had been so true and simple, misunderstood him as she might. They were a strange set of recollections that followed, and his mind flew past them quickly, his whole heart, and soul, and strength uniting, as he stood silently there, to vow once more lifelong service and devotion to her who in old times he would truly have called "the empress of his affections."

In some strange way, his quiet presence brought Poppy's old self back to her as well as to him. His voice and eyes, with all their new moving power, still came to her as part of the old days when she ruled as a young queen over all her willing subjects, and could never have recognised herself, even in fancy, as tired, dethroned, forsaken. His constant affection, sadden her as it might, brought new life to her lonely spirit; Mr. Cantillon had dimly known that it must be so. With this new life it brought back something of the character and the associations of younger days, and a restored power of balance and self-command, which made it unlikely—here Geoffrey worked unconsciously against himself—that Porphyria would drift far with the stream by whose current she was being swept a little way.

A sudden effort added clearness to the

situation, keeping Geoffrey where he was, and where it would seem that she intended him to be. That dangerous response which in spite of herself she was giving to his half-expressed confession, and which in another moment would have become distinct encouragement, so that she would have had only herself to thank for any serious consequences, was suddenly silenced. She sat upright in her chair, once more the Lady of Bryans, and with a sweet, kind dignity which could not make him angry, though to his mood it was like ice encountering fire, she said: "Please sit down, and tell me where you are going. I know nothing. Mr. Cantillon did not tell me he had seen you."

Geoffrey was conscious of a sensation of wonder. Standing in the same place, looking on the ground like a disgraced man, he told her in low, matter-of-fact words all about himself; how he had come to the conclusion that he should never be able to paint, and therefore must begin life over again. That this was impossible, except in a new world, and that farming in America seemed the most thorough change, the best chance for forgetting all that had gone before.

"But your painting—isn't that a pity?" she murmured; and now that he no longer looked at her, she lifted her long brown lashes and gazed at him with something wistful in the depths of her grey eyes, something very like regret.

This strong, handsome man, dark and pale, with lines in his face which were not the result of years—his life was a failure because he loved her. If he had lost all heart in his work, this was not the work's fault; it was hers. She had killed his ambition; for her he had walked in dark paths; if he could not give her his life in one way, he was determined to sacrifice it in another. Now, if they had not met by chance, he would have gone silently away without seeing her again; he said "for ever," and she knew he meant it. He would never have troubled her then with a word of complaint or confession, but he would have loved her all his life as he loved her now; she felt sure of it. It was a strange chance that had brought him to her, and on the whole she was glad he had come. She could do nothing—could she? No, of course not. William Thorne's son! Thus she answered a voice that spoke to her as she let her eyes rest on Geoffrey's dark bowed head—he was saying something about Art, but she did not hear him

—telling her: "He loves you, he loves you better than any one in the world," asking her, with marvellous presumption: "Can-not you marry him?"

The worst of it was that this voice would not be silenced. It immediately brought forward the most levelling, the most revolutionary arguments, reminding her of doctrines of equality which had attracted her and alarmed Aunt Fanny when she was a girl. They had only been playthings then; they rose up with power now when that voice asked her in the plainest language whether Geoffrey Thorne was inferior to Arthur Nugent. Poppy had enough common sense to refuse to listen, to remind this impertinent voice that moral superiority was not in the question. It began to puzzle her with some other mocking remark, but fell into silence presently, perhaps being conscious that its work was being done by some higher power.

"Have you said good-bye to them at Bryans?" Poppy asked, still watching Geoffrey, for he had obstinately ceased to look at her. "Your sister must be sorry."

"I don't know," he said. "Yes, Lucy has always been much better to me than I deserved. She says she will come out and see me when I am settled."

"You will come home to see her."

"No. I never mean to set foot in England again."

"Poor old England!" she said, half smiling.

His eyes met hers with a sudden flash which brought the colour to her cheeks, disquieting her so strangely that she got up and walked to the mantelpiece, half turning away from him.

"Must I go?"

"You have hardly told me anything yet—about your plans when you get there; but you will write—we shall hear about you," she answered a little inconsequently.

"No, I don't think I shall write," he said.

There was a moment's silence, and then Poppy made her last effort.

It ought to be possible, surely, to send him away both happy and reasonable. She did not want him to go, but was afraid to give a hint of this, knowing that the very shadow of a hint would keep him.

Yet she felt that she might say anything she chose to this faithful servant. She understood so much of him as to believe that his happiness lay in pleasing

her, and therefore that she need not fear his taking any advantage of anything she might say. All that she knew beyond was more instinct than knowledge. It was only a consciousness which warned her of elements in him beyond her control or understanding. She had this, and yet she could not feel herself wrong in trusting him, appealing to the chivalry she had never known to fail. She could not resist the wish to place her real feeling for him on a clear and happy footing before he went, if it might be in any way possible. And thus she suddenly found herself saying:

"Geoffrey—we have been friends so long. You have always been so good to me all my life; you must know how I value it—all your great kindness. Do understand me. I think you must understand me. I cannot bear to see you unhappy—to feel it is my fault, perhaps—and yet what can I do?"

The music of her low voice, which trembled a little, was sweeter than ever to Geoffrey's ears—and she had called him by his name. Perhaps she had no right to be surprised if a moment later he was standing close to her, had very gently taken both her unresisting hands, lifted them, kissed them, kept them folded in his.

"I think I always have understood you," he said. "It is not your fault if I have always loved you too. You are the queen of my life, and will be till it ends. Love can live on very little."

"Yours can," she said, the thought springing to her lips before she knew.

She flushed and trembled, but did not withdraw her hands. A kind of bewilderment was coming over her again, with the discovery that she had never yet known

what love meant, never felt the presence of this power which watched her from Geoffrey's eyes, and held her with his hands. She hardly ventured to look up; when she did, the sadness of his gaze touched her, and made her speak again.

"You must go," she whispered. "Be good. Don't misunderstand me."

"There is no danger of that," he said. "I know too well; but remember that it is the last time, and say something more to me, if you can. Tell me that you are glad I love you, though you don't, and never could love me."

She did not speak at once. A struggle which would have surprised every one who knew her, and no one more than him, was going on between Poppy's tired human nature and all outside considerations. She was very pale now, her eyes were bent down, while he still held her hands.

"Say something," he murmured half impatiently.

She suddenly lifted her head and looked straight up into his dark, shining eyes.

"I will say this, then: You must go now; but come back in a year and—tell me again. Remember, I promise nothing. And you—may forget in America; you may change your mind."

"Now you are cruel," he said.

Poppy could hardly see or stand. She leaned against the mantelpiece, and somehow, through a dark mist, knew that he was kneeling at her feet. He was saying a few words which she could hardly understand—a form of good-bye, perhaps—he had laid her hand on his forehead and his lips. Then he was standing up, and she heard his last request.

"Now, will you kiss me—once—because it is good-bye, you know!"

And Poppy kissed him.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

ALL the rooms in the house in Chelsea were bright and pretty, and by no means the least attractive was the dining-room. The late breakfast-hour fixed by Mrs. Romaine, "just for the season," as she said, gave plenty of time for the sun to find its way in at the windows; and on the morning following Julian's dinner with Lord Garstin the sunshine was dancing on the walls, and the soft, warm air floating in at the open windows, as though the thunderstorm of the previous evening had cleared the air to some purpose.

The aspect of the two occupants of the room, as they faced one another across the dainty little breakfast-table, was in perfect harmony with the brightness of their surroundings. They had been laughing and talking after their usual fashion ever since they sat down; talking of the party of the night before and of engagements in the future; and finally reverting to Lord Garstin's dinner and Marston Loring, of whom Julian had already had a great deal to say.

"I have a kind of feeling that he and I are going to be chums, mother!" he said as he carried his coffee-cup round the table to her to be refilled. "I think he took to me rather, do you know?"

"That's a very surprising thing, isn't it?" returned his mother, laughing. "And you took to him? Well, if you must pick up a chum, you couldn't do it under better auspices than Lord Garstin's."

"I took to him no end!" answered Julian eagerly. "I do hope you'll like him."

"I think I am pretty sure to like him," said Mrs. Romaine graciously. "I remember hearing about him some time ago—that he was quite one of the rising young men of the day. He was to have been introduced to me then. I forget why it didn't come off. There's your coffee!"

Julian took his cup with a word of thanks and turned back to his chair; and his mother began again.

"Mr. Loring is a member of the Prince's, I suppose?" she said. The "Prince's" was the name of the club at which Lord Garstin's dinner had been given. "I suppose you will want to be setting up a club in no time, sir?"

Julian laughed, and then replied somewhat eagerly and confidentially, as though in unconscious response to a certain invitation in his mother's tone.

"Well, of course a fellow does want a club, mother," he said. "One feels it more and more, don't you know? Of course I should awfully like to belong to the Prince's."

"And why not?" responded his mother brightly, watching him rather narrowly as she spoke. "Lord Garstin would put you up, I've no doubt, if I asked him."

Julian's eyes sparkled.

"It would be first-rate!" he exclaimed. "Mother, it's awfully jolly of you!" He paused a moment and then continued tentatively: "It would be rather expensive, you know. That's the only thing!"

"So I suppose!" answered his mother, laughing. "Oh, you're a very expensive luxury altogether! However, I imagine another hundred a year would do!" Then as he broke into vehement demonstrations

of delight and gratitude, she added with another laugh which did not seem to ring quite true: "I don't think you need ever run short of money!"

There was a moment's pause as Julian, the picture of glowing satisfaction, finished his breakfast, and then Mrs. Romaine rose.

"What are you going to do this morning?" she said. "Read?"

Julian glanced out of the window.

"Well," he said, "it's an awfully jolly morning, isn't it? I promised to see after some live-stock for Miss Pomeroy's stall—puppies, and kittens, and canary birds. Rum idea, isn't it? What are you doing this morning, dear?"

It turned out that Mrs. Romaine had nothing particular on her hands beyond a visit to a jeweller in Bond Street, and accepting very easily his substitution of Miss Pomeroy's commission for the legal studies to which he was supposed to devote himself in the mornings, she took up his reference to the weather, and suggested that they should drive together to execute first his business and then her own.

"It will be rather nice driving this morning," she said. "And we can take a turn in the Park."

Certainly there was a certain amount of excuse for those people who had already begun to say that Mrs. Romaine was never happy without her son by her side.

She spared no pains, however, to make him happy with her, though no effort was ever perceptible in her gay little artificial manner; and as they drove along there was probably no brighter or brisker talk than theirs in progress in all London. They drove through the West End streets and penetrated, in search of Miss Pomeroy's requirements, into regions into which Mrs. Romaine had hardly ever penetrated before; regions which rather amused her to-day in their squalor. When Julian had done his commission in plenty of time to undo it and do it again before the bazaar came off, as he remarked with a laugh, they turned back again and went to Bond Street.

"I have a little private matter to attend to here," said Julian, as he followed his mother into the jeweller's shop. "You just have the kindness to stop at your end of the shop, will you, please, and leave me to mine?"

Mrs. Romaine laughed and shook her head at him. It was within a few days of her birthday, which was always demonstratively honoured by her son.

"Now, you are not to be extravagant," she said, holding up a slender, threatening finger with mock severity. "Mind, I will not have it. I shall descend upon you unawares, and keep you in order."

She let him leave her with another laugh, and he disappeared to the other end of the shop, while she followed a shopman to a counter near the door. Just turning away from it, she met Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter.

"Now, this is really most delightful!" exclaimed Mrs. Pomeroy, if any speech so comfortable and so entirely unexcited may be described as an exclamation. "It is always charming to see you, dear Mrs. Romaine, of course; but it really is particularly charming this morning, isn't it, Maud?"

"That's very nice," said Mrs. Romaine brightly, turning to Maud Pomeroy with a smile, and pressing the girl's hand with an affectionate familiarity developed in her with regard to Miss Pomeroy by the last few weeks. A hardly perceptible touch of additional satisfaction had come to her face as she saw the mother and daughter. "Please tell me why?"

"Yes, of course," said Mrs. Pomeroy placidly; she sat down as she spoke with that instinct for personal ease under all circumstances, which was her ruling characteristic. "That is just what I want to do. My dear Mrs. Romaine, it is the bazaar, of course. It really is a most awkward thing, isn't it, Maud? It seems that we have asked twenty-one ladies—all most important—to become stall-holders, and we can't possibly make room for more than eighteen stalls! Now, what would you—Ah, Mr. Romaine, how do you do?"

Mrs. Pomeroy had broken off her tale of woe as placidly as she had begun it, and had greeted Julian with comfortable cordiality. He had come up hastily, not becoming aware of his mother's companions until he was close to them.

"This is awfully lucky for me!" he exclaimed. "I want a lady desperately for half a minute, and my mother won't do. Miss Pomeroy," turning eagerly to the demure, correct-looking figure standing by Mrs. Pomeroy's side, "will you come to the other end of the shop with me for half a minute? It would be awfully good of you."

The words were spoken in a tone of fashionable good-fellowship—the pseudo good-fellowship which passes for the real

thing in society—which, as addressed by Julian Romayne to Miss Pomeroy and her mother, was one of the results of his work in connection with the bazaar; and before Miss Pomeroy could answer, Mrs. Romayne interposed. Somebody very frequently did interpose, when Miss Pomeroy was addressed. No one ever seemed to expect opinions or decisions from her; perhaps because she was her mother's daughter; perhaps because of her curiously characterless exterior, while the fact that she had never been known to controvert a statement—in words—doubtless accentuated the tendency of her acquaintance to make statements for her.

"It will be awfully good of you," Mrs. Romayne said to her now, laughing, "it will be awfully good of you, if you are kind enough to help this silly fellow, to insist on his remembering that his mother will be very angry indeed if he is extravagant. I shall have to give up having a birthday, I think."

Then as Julian, with a gay gesture of repression to his mother, waited for Miss Pomeroy's answer with another pleading, "It would be ever so good of you," the girl, with a glance at her mother, said, with a conventional smile, "With pleasure," and walked away by his side.

Mrs. Pomeroy looked after Julian with an approving smile. He was a favourite of hers.

"Such a nice fellow," she murmured amiably; and Mrs. Romayne laughed her pretty, self-conscious little laugh.

"So glad you find him so," she said. "Oh, by-the-bye, dear Mrs. Pomeroy, can you tell me anything about a Mr. Marston Loring? He goes everywhere, doesn't he? I think I have seen him at your house."

"Oh, yes," returned Mrs. Pomeroy, as placidly as ever, but with a decision which indicated that she was giving expression to a popular verdict, not merely to an opinion of her own. "He is quite a young man to know. Very clever, and rising. I don't know what his people were; he has been so successful that it really doesn't signify, you know. He lives in chambers—I don't remember where, but it is a very good address."

"Has he money?" asked Mrs. Romayne.

"I really don't know," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "He is doing extremely well at the bar. By the way, they say," and herewith Mrs. Pomeroy lowered her voice and confided to her interlocutor two or three details in connection with Marston Loring's

private life—the life which in the world no one is supposed to recognise—which might have been considered by no means to his credit. They were not details which affected his society character in any way, however, and Mrs. Romayne only laughed with such slight affectation of reprobation as a woman of the world should show.

"Men are all alike, I suppose," she said with that fashionable indulgence which has probably done as much as anything else towards making men "all alike." "By-the-bye, he was Lord Dunstan's best man, wasn't he?"

Mrs. Pomeroy was just confirming to Mr. Marston Loring what was evidently a certificate of social merit, when Julian and Miss Pomeroy reappeared, and Mrs. Romayne, with a pretty exclamation at herself as a "frightful gossip," turned to the shopman, who had been waiting her pleasure at a discreet distance, and transacted her business.

"We haven't settled anything about this trying business of the twenty-one stall-holders," said Mrs. Pomeroy plaintively, as she finished. "Now, I wonder—we were thinking of taking a turn in the Park, weren't we, Maud?" Mrs. Pomeroy had a curious little habit of constantly referring to her daughter. "It would be so kind of you, dear Mrs. Romayne, if you would send your carriage home and take a turn with us, you and Mr. Romayne, and I would take you home, of course. I really am anxious to know what you advise, for there seems to be an idea that I am in some way responsible for the awkwardness. So absurd, you know. I am quite sure I have only done as I was told."

Apparently it had not occurred to Mrs. Pomeroy that to do as you are told by four or five different people with totally different ends in view is apt to lead to confusion.

Mrs. Romayne fell in with the plan proposed, after an instant's demur, with smiling alacrity, and the "turn in the Park" that followed was a very gay one. Miss Pomeroy and Julian laughed and talked together—that is to say, Julian laughed and talked in the best of good spirits, and Miss Pomeroy put in just the correct little words and pretty smiles which were wanted to keep his conversation in full swing. Mrs. Romayne and Mrs. Pomeroy, facing them, disposed of the difficulty in connection with the bazaar, after a good deal of irrelevant discussion, by saying very often, and in a great many

words, that two more stalls must be got in somewhere; a decision which seemed to Mrs. Pomeroy to make everything perfectly right, although she had had it elaborately demonstrated to her that such a course was absolutely impossible.

It was half-past one when Mrs. Romaine and Julian were put down at their own door, and the barouche drove off amid a chorus of light laughter and last words. The sunshine, the fresh air, the movement, or something less simple and less physical, seemed to have had a most exhilarating effect on Mrs. Romaine. Her face was almost as radiant in its curiously different fashion as Julian's was radiant with the unreasoning good spirits of youth.

"Such nice people!" she said lightly. "I wonder whether lunch is ready? I'm quite starving! Oh, letters!" taking up three or four which lay on the hall-table. "Let us trust they are interesting!" She turned into the dining-room as she spoke, sorting the envelopes in her hand. "One for you—your friend Von Mühler, isn't it?" she said, tossing it to Julian carelessly. "One for me—an invitation obviously. One from Mrs. Ponsonby, about her stall, I suppose. And one from——"

She stopped suddenly. The last letter of the pile was contained in a small square envelope, and addressed in what was obviously a man's handwriting—a good handwriting, clear and strong, but somewhat cramped and precise. "Mrs. William Romaine, 22, Queen Anne Street, Chelsea." A curious stillness seemed to come over the little alert figure as the pale blue eyes caught sight of the writing, and then Mrs. Romaine moved and walked slowly away to the window, still with her eyes fixed on the envelope. She paused a moment, and then she opened it and drew out a sheet of note-paper bearing a few lines only in the same small, clear hand.

"Well, mother, and what have your correspondents got to say? I have had no end of a screed from Von Mühler."

Nearly ten minutes had passed, and Mrs. Romaine started violently. She thrust the letter—still open in her hand, though she was looking fixedly out of the window—back into its envelope and turned. Her face had altered curiously and completely. All its colour, all the genuine animation which had pervaded it as she came into the room, had disappeared; it was pale and hard-looking, and the lines about the mouth and eyes were very visible.

"A dinner invitation from Lady Ashton," she said, "and a long rigmarole from Mrs. Ponsonby to tell me that she is resigning her stall, and why she is doing it. Poor Mrs. Pomeroy should be grateful to her!"

Her tone was an exaggeration of her bright carelessness of ten minutes before, forced and unnatural; her back was towards the window, or even Julian's boyish eyes might have noticed the stiff unreality of the smile with which she spoke.

They sat down to lunch together, but the strange change which had come to her did not pass away. Julian did most of the talking, though the readiness of her comments and her smiles—which left her lips always hard and set, and never seemed to touch her eyes—prevented his being in the least aware of the fact. Their afternoon was spent apart; but when they met again there was that about her face which made Julian say with some surprise:

"Are you tired, mother?"

They were going to a large dinner-party before the very smart "at home" to which Julian and Mr. Loring had referred on the previous evening as an opportunity for meeting, and Mrs. Romaine was magnificently dressed. There were diamonds round her throat and in her hair, and as they flashed and sparkled, seeming to lend glow and animation to her face as she laughed at him for a ridiculous boy, Julian thought carelessly that he must have imagined the drawn look which had struck him—though he had only recognised it as "tired-looking"—on his mother's face. As though his words had startled or even annoyed her, she gave neither Julian nor any one else any further excuse for taxing her with fatigue. Throughout the long and rather dull dinner she was vivacity itself; her face always smiling, her bright artificial laugh always ready. As the evening went on a little flush made its appearance on her cheeks, as though the mental stimulus under which that gaiety was produced involved a veritable quickening of the pulses; and her son, when he met her in the hall after she had uncloaked for their second party, thought that he had never seen his mother look "jollier," as he expressed it.

"We must look out for Loring," he said eagerly. "Oh, there he is, mother, just inside the doorway! That clever-looking fellow, do you see, with a yellow button-hole!"

It was easier to recognise an acquaintance than to approach within speaking distance of him; and some time elapsed, during which Mrs. Romayne and Julian exchanged greetings on all sides, and were received by Lady Bracondale, before they found themselves also just inside the doorway. Mrs. Romayne had given one quick, keen glance in the direction indicated by Julian, and then had become apparently oblivious of Mr. Marston Loring's existence until Julian finally exclaimed:

"Well met, Loring! Awfully pleased to see you! Mother, may I introduce Mr. Marston Loring?"

She turned her head then, and bent it very graciously, holding out her hand with her most charming smile.

"I have known you by sight for a long time, Mr. Loring!" she said. "I am delighted to make your acquaintance!"

"The delight is mine!" was the response spoken with just that touch of well-bred deference which is never so attractive to a woman as when it is exhibited in conjunction with such a personality as Loring's. "It is one for which I have wished for a long time!"

"Seen the papers to-night?" interposed Julian eagerly. "We've lost Nottingham, you see!"

He was alluding to a bye-election which had led to the political discussion of the evening before, and Loring nodded.

"I see," said Loring. "Romayne has told you, no doubt," he went on, turning to Mrs. Romayne, "that we foregathered to a considerable extent last night over politics—and other things." The last words were spoken with a glance at the younger man which seemed to ascribe to their acquaintance an altogether more personal and friendly footing than political discussion alone could have afforded it, and Mrs. Romayne laughed very graciously.

"Yes; he has told me!" she said. "I am rather thinking of getting a little jealous of you, Mr. Loring."

A few minutes' more talk followed—talk in which Loring bore himself with his usual cynical and blasé manner, just tempered into even unusual effectiveness—and then Mrs. Romayne prepared to move on.

"You must come and see us," she said to Loring. "Julian will give you the address. I am at home on Fridays; and I hope you will dine with us before long!"

She gave him a pretty nod and an "au revoir," and turned away.

"He's awfully jolly, isn't he, mother?" exclaimed Julian, as soon as they were out of earshot.

"Very good style," returned Mrs. Romayne approvingly. "He is just the kind of man to get on. You have a good deal of discrimination, sir," she added with a laugh into his eyes.

The mother and son were separated after that, and about half an hour later Mrs. Romayne caught sight of Julian disappearing with a very pretty girl, whose face she did not know, in the direction of the supper-room, just as she herself was greeted by Lord Garstin and pressed to repair thither.

"Thanks, no," she said lightly. "There is such a crowd, and I really don't want anything."

She paused. That accentuated vivacity was still about her, as the little flush was still on her face. But as she unfurled her fan, a certain intentness came into her eyes behind their sparkle which gave them something of the look which had lurked in them during her first weeks in London—a look of vigilant determination. She looked up at Lord Garstin with a little smile and a gesture which he thought unusually charming.

"I want a little chat with you, though, very much," she said with pretty confidence. "I'm going to ask you to give me some advice, do you know. Will it bore you frightfully?"

"On the contrary, it will delight me," was the ready and by no means insincere response.

Mrs. Romayne made a gracious and grateful movement of her head. "I would rather take your opinion than that of any other man I know," she said confidentially. She stopped and laughed slightly. "It's about my boy, of course!" she said. "I want to know what you think of a club for a young man in his position? Do you think, now, that it is a good thing?"

"Emphatically, yes," returned Lord Garstin. "I consider a good club of the first importance to a young man. Your young man ought to be a member of the Prince's." He paused a moment, looking at her as she nodded her head softly, waiting as though for further words of wisdom from him, and thought what a delightful little woman she was. "Suppose I talk to him about it?" he said pleasantly.

"I will see to it with pleasure if you would like it."

Nothing, certainly, could have been more delightful than Mrs. Romaine's response. For an instant, as she spoke just the right words of graceful acknowledgement and acceptance, the intentness in her eyes flashed into the old triumph. Then she made a gaily disparaging comment on club life, and Lord Garstin's advocacy of it, and a few minutes' bantering, laughing repartees followed—that society repartees of which Mrs. Romaine was a mistress. From thence she drifted into talk about the party, and a complaint of the heat of the room.

"It is time we were going, I think!" she remarked, with a gay little laugh. "But a mother is a miserable slave, you see! I am 'left until called for,' I suppose!"

"If I were not absolutely obliged to go myself," returned Lord Garstin, "I shouldn't encourage such a suggestion on your part. But as that is the case, unfortunately, shall I find your boy first and send him to you?"

Mrs. Romaine shook her head with another laugh.

"I saw him retire to the supper-room a little while ago with a very pretty girl," she said. "I make it a point never to hurry him under such circumstances! But if you should meet him you might tell him that I am quite ready when he is. Good night!"

The room was not by any means crowded now; it was getting late and a great many people were in the supper-room. The corner of the room in which Mrs. Romaine was standing happened to be nearly deserted; there was no one near her, and after Lord Garstin left her, she stood still, fanning herself and looking straight before her with her bright smile and animated expression rather stereotyped on her face. Suddenly, as if involuntarily, she turned her head; she looked across to the other side of the room and met the eyes of a man standing against the wall, who had been looking fixedly at her ever since Lord Garstin joined her. For an instant not the slightest perceptible change of expression touched her face; only the very absoluteness of its immobility suggested that that immobility was the result of a sudden and tremendous effort of self-control; then the colour faded slowly from her cheeks and from her lips; the smile did not disappear but it gradually

assumed a ghastly appearance of being carved in marble; her eyes widened slightly and became strangely fixed. The man was Dennis Falconer, and he and she were looking at one another across the gulf of eighteen years.

It was only for a moment. Then Mrs. Romaine, still quite colourless, lifted her eyebrows prettily and made a gesture of amazed recognition, and Falconer moved and came slowly towards her.

"What a surprising thing!" she exclaimed, holding out her hand. "I had no idea you were here to-night! How do you do? Welcome home!"

Her tone was perfectly easy and gracious, so ultra-easy, indeed, that it deprived her words of any personal or emotional significance whatever, and relegated their meeting-place with subtle skill to the most conventional of society grounds. The rather distinguished-looking man with the good reserved manner who stood before her accepted the position with grave readiness.

"Thank you," he said. He spoke with distant courtesy, about which there was not even the suggestion of that matter-of-course friendliness as of distant kinship which had made her reception of him nearly perfect as a work of art. "It is a great pleasure to us to be in England again."

"You have been away—let me see—two years?" said Mrs. Romaine, with the vivacious assumption of intelligent interest which the social situation demanded. "Five, is it? Really? And you have done wonderful things, I hear. Funnily enough, I have been hearing about you only to-night. I must congratulate you."

He bent his head with a courteous gesture of thanks.

"You have had my note, I hope?" he said. "You are settled in London now, Thomson tells me."

Thomson was the family lawyer, and he and Dennis Falconer himself were Mrs. Romaine's trustees under old Mr. Falconer's will.

"Oh, yes!" she answered suavely. "I had it to-day, just before lunch. So nice of you to write to me. Yes, we are settled——"

She had been fanning herself carelessly throughout the short colloquy, glancing at Falconer or about the room with every appearance of perfect ease; but now, as her eyes wandered to the other end of the room something seemed to catch her

attention. She hesitated, appeared to forget what she had intended to say, tried to recover herself, and failed.

Julian had come into the room, and was just parting gaily from some one in the doorway. Dennis Falconer did not take up her unfinished sentence; he followed the direction of her eyes across the room until his own rested upon Julian, and then he started slightly and glanced down at the woman by his side.

Mrs. Romayne laughed a rather high, unnatural laugh. She faced him with her eyes very hard and bright, and her lips smiling; and through all the artificiality of her face and manner there was something lurking in those hard, bright eyes as she did it, something not to be caught or defined, which made the movement almost heroic.

"You recognise him?" she said lightly. "Ridiculously like me, isn't he?"

At that moment Julian started across the room, evidently to come to his mother. He came on, stopping incessantly to exchange good-nights, laughing, bowing, and smiling; and, as though there were a fascination for them about his gay young figure, the man and woman standing together at the other end of the room watched him draw nearer and nearer. Words continued to come from Mrs. Romayne, a pretty, inconsequent flow of society chatter, but it no more tempered the strange gaze with which her eyes followed her son than did the unheeding silence with which Falconer received them as his grave eyes rested also on the young man. The whole thing was so incongruous; the expression of those two pair of eyes was so utterly out of harmony with their surroundings, and with the laughing, unconscious boy on whom they were fixed, that they seemed to draw him out from the brightly dressed, smiling group through which he passed, and isolate him strangely in a weird atmosphere of his own.

"Here you are, sir!" cried his mother gaily, looking no longer at Julian as he stood close to her at last, but beyond him.

"Lord Garstin told me you were ready to go, dear," said Julian pleasantly. "I hope I haven't kept you?"

"There was no hurry," she answered, smiling; her voice was a little thin and strained. "We will go now, I think, but I want to introduce you first to some one whose name you know. This is your cousin, Dennis Falconer."

SOME NOTED CARDINALS.

EVEN if not otherwise interested in ecclesiastical affairs, people cannot help being impressed when they hear of a countryman of their own being elevated to the rank of a Cardinal. It would not be fair to attribute our respect for the title to the reason Lord Melbourne gave for his appreciation of the most noble Order of the Garter, "that there is no humbugging pretence of merit about the thing"; for looking to the later examples of English Cardinals, it would be impossible to deny their claims to the highest rank in their adopted Church. But the historical associations with the title are so numerous and varied, the dignity itself is of such ancient and peculiar lustre, that the eminence it confers seems quite independent of the personal merit of its wearer.

It is only a year ago, on a sombre winter's day, that we saw the symbols of a Cardinal's dignity borne upon the simple coffin of the titular Archbishop of Westminster, as the long funeral train passed through sorrowful crowds of the humbler ranks of the people; and the sight of the red Cardinal's hat thus elevated gave a vivid sense of the long historical perspective in which the famous Cardinals of the past appear—so many noted figures who helped to make the histories of their times.

The origin of the title goes back to the early ages of the Church. Certain Bishops of dioceses near Rome, the priests of the principal Churches, the chief deacons of the fourteen districts into which Rome was divided, formed the Pope's Council, and assisted in the great functions and ceremonies of the Christian Ritual. There are still fourteen Cardinal deacons, but the number of the other orders of the "Sacred College" has varied at different periods, till it was settled by Sixtus the Fifth at seventy for the whole College, "as Moses chose seventy elders of the people."

But the early Cardinals were exclusively Roman functionaries, and although the Holy See called to itself distinguished prelates of every nation, yet, in assuming the office of Cardinal, they usually vacated their other preferments, and took up their abode in Rome. Such was the case in the English Church, at all events, and though we have Englishmen among the Cardinals of the twelfth century, such as Robert Pullen, Cardinal and Chancellor at the

Roman Court, Anno Domini 1144, Nicholas Breakspear, who became Pope as Adrian the Fourth, and Herbert de Bohran, who was Becket's Chancellor, and present at his murder; yet the first notable figure of a Cardinal in our annals is that of Stephen Langton. Langton, it will be remembered, was forced upon King John, as Archbishop of Canterbury, by the Papal power, but proved himself a thorough Englishman in the part he took in obtaining Magna Charta.

A contemporary of Langton was Robert Curson, a Derbyshire man, who had studied at Oxford, and who was afterwards Chancellor of the University of Paris. Removing to Rome, he was made Cardinal and sent by the Pope to preach the Crusade in France. Diverted from the Holy War in Palestine, he went with Guy de Montfort against the heretics of Toulouse. The Cardinal, however, eventually started for the Holy Land, but died on his way at Damietta, Anno Domini 1218.

Then there was Robert Kilewardly, one of the Black Friars or Dominicans, chosen Archbishop of Canterbury, who crowned and anointed Edward the First on the twenty-fifth of July, 1274, but who, on being made a Cardinal four years later, had to give up his see and proceed to Rome. Another English Cardinal, Black Hugh of Evesham, owed his promotion to his skill in medicine, of which he was pronounced the Phoenix; and among others less distinguished, in the fourteenth century we have Simon of Langham, originally a monk of St. Peter's, Westminster, who saw the Black Death sweep away two-thirds of his brethren, and who became Abbot of that venerable monastery, the church of which survives as our Westminster Abbey. The Abbot's skilful financial management caused him to be selected by King Edward the Third as his Lord High Treasurer, and his elevation successively to the see of Ely and the Archbishopric of Canterbury. That his financial skill was not equally relished by those over whom he ruled, is evident from a Latin couplet which was suggested by his translation to Canterbury, and which has been freely rendered:

Heaven rejoiced freely, when Simon quitted Ely;
Mortals wept in Kent, that Simon thither went.

But Simon had to give up the primacy when he was made Cardinal, and died at Avignon in 1376.

The first political Cardinal of our series, more the statesman than the

Churchman, is Henry of Beaufort. We seem to be acquainted with this Cardinal from the play of "Henry the Sixth," and with his quarrels with Humphrey of Gloucester.

The Cardinal of Winchester forbids!

is a pronouncement that naturally maddens the good Duke Humphrey. The playwright takes the popular view of the matter, and ascribes the murder of the Duke to the aspiring Cardinal, while his death-bed is that of an unrepentant sinner—

He dies and makes no sign.

But the Cardinal, perhaps, is not so black as he is painted. He joined, indeed, in a crusade against the Hussites, although he actually employed the troops he had raised for that enterprise in defending the English conquests in France. He was also one of the council which condemned Joan of Arc to the flames; but these matters, which do not engage our sympathies on his side, were not likely to have troubled his conscience.

A friend and ally of Beaufort was Cardinal Kemp, a man of Kent, and Archbishop first of York and then of Canterbury; "one of the wisest lords in all this land," said the "meek usurper," Henry the Sixth, when he heard of his death. Kemp was Lancastrian to the backbone; but his successor, Cardinal Bourchier, contrived skilfully to see-saw between York and Lancaster. It was he who took the young Duke of York from his mother's arms when she had sought sanctuary in Westminster, pledging his own life for his safety. And he certainly saw him safely into the Tower. Then he was persuaded to crown wicked Uncle Richard, and seems to have thought no more of the poor babes in the Tower. He crowned Henry the Seventh after the death of Richard at Bosworth, and he married the King to Elizabeth of York; and soon after the good Cardinal-Archbishop died peacefully at his favourite house at Knowle.

Then we have John Morton, the builder of the handsome towers and gateway that are such a familiar object from the Thames at Lambeth. A stirring priest was he, if ever there was one; concerned as Bishop of Ely in the plots which led to the downfall of Richard the Third, and rewarded for his services to the new dynasty by being made My Lord of Canterbury. Thomas More, who had served him, makes his eulogy. He loved gardening, was simple in his way of living, yet liberal in public works. That he was

severe with heretics was only to his credit in the eyes of good Sir Thomas, who had a fine turn himself for applying such needful discipline.

As the sixteenth century opens, the new spirit which moved the world seems also to have been infused into the Cardinalate. We have Cardinal Ximenes in Spain, the wasted, pallid anchorite who appears almost in the guise of a skeleton at the brilliant banquets of the magnificent Court of Isabel. But Ximenes showed all the dexterity of a practical man of the world in his efforts to consolidate the recently formed and still imperfectly welded monarchy of Spain. He, too, experienced

How wretched

Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours,
in the ingratitude of the young Prince whom he had so faithfully served, the future Emperor Charles the Fifth, that astute youth who took in all the greybeards of Europe.

In Wolsey we have another great statesman, who forms a conspicuous figure in our annals with his brilliant train of nobles and of gentleman servitors, with his magnificent palaces, his generous patronage of the arts, his munificent foundations for the spread of education.

Exceeding wise, fair-spoken, and persuading, the Cardinal might have retained his master's favour to the end, in spite of the cabals against him, had he not fixed his eyes too obstinately on the papal tiara.

When Henry the Eighth broke altogether with the See of Rome, a Cardinal, it may be noted, was one of his earliest victims. Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, was in the Tower for denying the King's supremacy over the Church, when the Pope, as a mark of approval, made him Cardinal. As in the present day, when a prelate is unable to attend the Consistory in person, the Pope sends an ecclesiastic commissioned to deliver the biretta and other insignia of office to the new Cardinal, while one of the "noble guard" is entrusted with the red hat. The same formalities were arranged in Fisher's case, and the brutal jest of the King is well known—that the Pope might put the hat on his Cardinal's shoulders, for that he, the King, would not leave him a head on which to wear it.

With the Reformation comes to an end the list of official English Cardinals, with the exception of Cardinal Pole, closely connected with the Royal house, who escaped the King's jealous vengeance,

which vented itself on his mother and brother, who were both executed, and who lived to be Archbishop of Canterbury, under Mary's counter reformation. But although he lived in times of cruel persecution, the Cardinal, it seems, was a kind and gentle soul, who was ever averse to the burning of heretics.

Meantime we must not forget a Cardinal who applied himself to the burning of heretics with a fine verve and relish. Cardinal Beaton was of a good Scotch stock, the nephew of that Archbishop Beaton who wore a shirt of mail under his rochet, and whose "conscience clattered" when he laid his hand upon his heart, to disclaim any knowledge of the armed gathering of his allies the Hamiltons. The Cardinal himself was of the same strong texture, who had so fortified his Castle of St. Andrews, that "he feared neither English nor French." In reality he was strong for the old faith and the French alliance, and when he burnt George Wishart before the ramparts of his Castle, he felt that he was rid of a partisan of England, as well as a pestilent heretic. But he had not reckoned with the Lairds o' Fife, who had grievances of their own to avenge, as well as the death of their friend Wishart.

A band of sixteen avengers, under John and Norman Leslie, and Kirkcaldy of Grange, presented themselves one fine May morning at the Castle gates, which had just been opened to admit a crowd of workmen concerned in beautifying the Cardinal's fine château. They slipped in with the workmen unobserved, pounced upon the Cardinal's retinue one by one, and turned them out of the Castle, and closed and barricaded the gates, and then, in a body, they knocked at the Cardinal's door. The Cardinal, aroused by the tumult, had taken the alarm, and would not open. The thick oaken door resisted the efforts of the conspirators. Then some cried to bring fire, and this was being done when the Cardinal surrendered, and was presently hewed down and stabbed in a dozen places.

We are now arrived at the time of the wars of religion in France, when the house of Guise, conspicuous as the champions of the Church, were well represented among the Cardinals. Charles, brother of the great Duke of Guise, was made a Cardinal at twenty-two years of age; his brother Louis was also a Cardinal, and another Louis, Cardinal de Lorraine, was killed at

Blois in 1588. Of English Cardinals the age produces one of some note in his time, Cardinal Allen, of a good Lancashire family, and one of the founders of the English college for priests at Douai. Proscribed in England, he still contrived to visit his friends in Lancashire, and with the Jesuit Parsons was the chief adviser of the Catholic nobility of England, and he was always a thorn in the pillow of Queen Elizabeth. He is credited with a share in the design of the Spanish Armada; and anyhow, the Spanish fleet carried, in addition to the thumb-screws and pincers, piles of tracts bearing Allen's name, which were for distribution among the conquered English, showing how Elizabeth was a usurper, and the Spaniards only the executors of Heaven's behests.

Of the same period is Cardinal Bellarmine, who gave his name to the "greybeard" jugs which were freely imported from Flanders in the reign of James the First. The Cardinal was an eloquent Jesuit father, but it is not easy to trace his connection with the jugs. Then we have Cardinal de Retz, notable in French annals, and early in the seventeenth century we come to the formidable name of Armand Jean du Plessis, better known as Cardinal Richelieu.

History, romance, the drama, have combined to illustrate the character of the great Cardinal. We see him bold, astute, unscrupulous, terrible alike to friends and enemies, but yet moved by great ideas and projects which he pursues with inexorable steadfastness. Then we have Mazarin, his successor, full of keen intelligence, and without a particle of principle, playing off parties and princes one against the other as in the card games in which he so much delighted. Mazarin's great passion was avarice, and the fortune he left was immense, yet we find his niece, Hortense, who inherited a great share of it, keeping a basset table for her subsistence in Chelsea, and a defaulter for her rates and taxes.

A fine figure of an English Cardinal was Philip Howard, brother of the Duke of Norfolk, and almoner to the Queen of Charles the Second, who was well known in the English society of the period, and who is mentioned by both Evelyn and Pepys in their diaries. A later Cardinal of the same noble house has only recently died.

The eighteenth century brings us another famous Spanish Cardinal, Alberoni,

the son of a gardener, who rose to be the chief Minister of State, and directed the policy of Spain according to his own ambitious projects. Part of his plan was the restoration of the Stuarts to the throne of England, and he had concerted the affair with Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, who had no affection for the house of Hanover. Another Spanish Armada was imminent, but it all ended in a trumpery landing at Loch Aish, almost forgotten except in local annals.

But the house of Hanover had a friend in another Cardinal, perhaps the least creditable of the whole list. William Dubois was the son of a poor apothecary in the Limousin, and educated by charity, took to teaching as a profession, and by a series of, for him, lucky chances, became tutor to Philip, son of the Duke of Orleans and that famous letter-writer, the Princess Palatine. When Phillip became Duke of Orleans and then Regent of France he was justly held one of the most dissolute men of the age, and his tutor had no better character. The Princess had only one piece of advice to give her son on his assuming the regency of France: "Never employ the wretch, the scoundrel Dubois." But Dubois was indispensable to the indolent, good-natured Prince, and he thoroughly realised the need of his patron for a good understanding with England. Dubois was the friend and ally of Lord Stanhope, the English Minister, and between them they managed to dash the Jacobites as well as the party of the Duke of Maine, which was striving to overthrow the Regent.

When Regent, Regency, and Cardinal have passed away, we find Cardinal Fleury acting as chief Minister at the scandalous Court of Versailles, a colourless kind of Minister, who strove to maintain peace all round and to keep things going for his time. Another Cardinal presents himself, De Rohan, the gay, the sceptical, in his green hunting suit with hounds, attendants, and cors de chasse, riding over a religious procession on the day of St. Sacrement.

After this period we can reckon on no more Cardinals of the stirring, picturesque, if occasionally scandalous character of those of old times. We have such good, amiable men as Cardinal Weld, of the ancient Catholic family of Lulworth, who gave up the family estate to his brother in order to enter the priesthood, and who eventually took up his residence at Rome as

Cardinal, where his palace was the resort of the English Catholics who visited Rome. Of the same period is Cardinal Antonelli, the sagacious Foreign Minister of the Papal States, and if his policy was eventually overborne, it was by strength of battalions and not by strength of intellect. Then we come to the first English Cardinal, since the Reformation, who had resided among us as a Roman Catholic bishop, Cardinal Wiseman, a man of keen and polished intellect, who as a polemical writer had few equals. Next we have Dr. Manning, whose death has left a blank in so many beneficent schemes, and the equally honoured name of Father Newman, the eminently literary Cardinal. These are gone, but we shall soon have Cardinals once more among us, and the red hat, in spite of all the changes of the times, will still carry with it the charm of all the centuries during which it has been the emblem of sacerdotal dignity, and the reminiscences of the conspicuous part it has played in the tangled web of European history.

HORATIAN FOLK-LORE.

THERE are innumerable resemblances between modern popular customs and beliefs, and the pagan lore of ancient Greece and Rome. The greatly increased means of communication provided by railways and other scientific developments of the last fifty or seventy years, have done much to stamp out local peculiarities, ancient survivals, and picturesque reminders of the past; but there is still existing, both in these islands and abroad, a vast amount of popular belief and custom which is essentially of pagan and ancient origin. The works of some of the old Latin writers are perfect mines of information on points of modern folk-lore. There are others which contain fewer allusions to matters of this kind than are to be found in the pages of such a writer, for example, as Ovid, but which still present many points of interest from the folk-lorist's point of view; and among these may be placed the works of Quintus Horatius Flaccus.

Early examples of notions and practices widely current in very recent times may be found in Horace. In the "*Ars Poetica*" he alludes to the influence of the moon ("*iraecunda Diana*") in producing mental aberration. The same notion is alluded to

in the Psalmist's line: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." The fallacy is preserved in the etymology of our own word "lunatic," and instances of the belief are continually cropping up in various parts of the world. West Indians say that the moon's beams falling upon any one sleeping in the open air will twist the features, and that lunatics are worse when the moon is at the full. The same ideas prevail among the islanders of the South Seas. In England the belief is common that if a child sleeps exposed to the beams of the moon, it will receive injury thereby. Lancashire children used to be told that when they saw the moonlight coming into their rooms, they should repeat the following lines, by way of averting the malign lunar influence:

I see the moon;
The moon sees me.
God bless the priest
That christened me.

Another allusion in Horace to which there are many parallels in both ancient and modern times, refers to the identification of a comet with the spirit of Julius Cæsar. In the twelfth ode of the first book the poet says, as translated by Francis:

And like the moon, the feeble fires among,
Conspicuous shines the Julian star.

It was commonly believed in Rome that a comet which appeared six months after Cæsar's death, was a sign of his translation to the society of the gods.

These fiery visitants of the sky were for many centuries held to be highly ominous. The old "*Saxon Chronicle*" observes: "This year the star called a comet appeared in August, and shone like a sun-beam every morning for three months; and Bishop Wilfrid was driven from his bishopric." It is not every bishop whose troubles disturb the sidereal system. The arrival of the comet of 1456 synchronised with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and was feared as the herald of further disaster.

In November, 1618, when Anne of Denmark, the Queen of James the First, lay dying, a brilliant comet blazed nightly for some weeks over England, and the common people thought that it was sent as a flambeau to the Queen's funeral. She did not die, however, till the following March. Milton, in the second book of "*Paradise Lost*," compares the appearance of Satan, when about to engage

in conflict with Death, to that of a comet burning in the northern sky, which

From his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence and war.

These words were probably written with special reference to the events of the time. During the composition of this part of the poem, a comet was seen for some weeks in the English skies, and as the celestial visitor arrived during the war with Holland, and as its appearance was followed in a few months by the great plague which devastated London in 1665, many people regarded the comet as the cause, or rather, the herald of the troubles which accompanied and followed its advent.

Some of our common sports are to be found in the pages of Horace. In the ninth ode of the first book there is evidently an allusion to the game of hide and seek, and the paying of a forfeit :

The laugh that from the corner flies,
The sportive fair one shall betray ;
Then boldly snatch the joyful prize,
A ring or bracelet tear away,
While she, not too severely coy,
Struggling shall yield the willing toy.

In the "Satires" (ii. 3) we come upon the still popular form of divination by apple-pips. Roman lovers, by the use of finger and thumb, shot the pips of apples towards the ceiling, and if they struck it the omen was good, and their wishes would be accomplished. Pips are still used as a medium of divination by rustic lovers. The love-lorn lass puts a pip in the fire as she pronounces her sweetheart's name ; if the pip bursts with a report it is a sign that he is faithful, if it burns silently his love is not true. In the "Shepherd's Week," Gay's *Hobnells* tries the experiment another way. She places a pip on each cheek, one for Lubberkin and the other for Boobyelod :

But Boobyelod soon drops upon the ground,
A certain token that his love's unsound ;
While Lubberkin sticks firmly to the last.

Much of our plant-lore is derived from classic beliefs and practices. Horace supplies us with one or two instances. There are several allusions to the connection between ivy and Bacchus, the memory of which, until quite recent times, was perpetuated amongst us by the use of an ivy-bush as the sign of a tavern. The ivy-bush may still be seen over the door of many a village auberge in France and other Continental countries. One of our old satirists remarks that "if the vintner's nose be at door, it is a sign sufficient, but the absence of this is supplied by the ivy-

bush." To "beat the ivy-bush" was ancient slang for the habit of frequenting taverns. Nowadays there is nothing to remind us of the old custom save the proverb, "Good wine needs no bush."

Horace alludes on more than one occasion to the sacredness of vervain, the "sacra verberna" which was bound about the sacrificial altars. In the ode to Phyllis, the poet enumerates the attractions of his house : the Alban cask of wine, parsley and ivy for her hair, the shining silver plate, and the preparations for a sacrifice—

With vervain chaste an altar bound,
Now thirsts for blood ; the victim's crowned.

Roman heralds and ambassadors wore vervain, or other sacred plant, entwined with fillets of white wool, bound about their heads ; the chaplet, on account of the holy herb, being the equivalent of the modern flag of truce. One of our English synonyms for vervain is "Holy Herb." It was of old considered a strong defence against witches.

Vervain was also used in various ways by our forefathers ; as a remedy for headache, in the composition of sundry charms and love-philtres, and as a security against snake-bites.

Ancient witchcraft is well illustrated in Horace's various allusions to the charms and love-potions with the concoction of which witches were credited, their horrible brewings of the kind described in "Macbeth," their power of riding in the air, their magic wheel, and use of waxen images. It is evident that in Horace's time witches were as active and as malignant as they were supposed to be in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in England, both Old and New. The idea that harm can be brought to an enemy or a rival by the manipulation of his image in wax, clay, or other like material, is very widespread, and has persisted in remote districts until the present time. The "modus operandi" varied considerably. If made of clay or wax, the thing could be put in a slow fire, and as the clay dried and crumbled into dust, or as the wax melted, so, it was thought, the life of the person whom it represented would be slowly wasted. Or the figure might be perforated by sharp needles, and agonising pain be thus caused to the original of the image. Ovid, referring to Medea, says, as translated by Sir Theodore Martin :

The absent she binds with her spells, and figures of
wax she devises,
And in their agonised spleen fine-pointed needles
she thrusts.

Chaucer speaks of witches who make

Ymages, lo, through which magike,
To make a man ben hool or syke.

The deaths of various sovereigns in mediæval times were attributed to these practices. The widow of Henry the Fourth of France, and her favourite, Leonora Concini, were accused of attempting the life of King Louis the Thirteenth by impaling a waxen image of His Majesty with pins. At the trial of Concini, she was asked by the judges to explain the arts by which she had gained an ascendancy over the Queen; and she replied boldly, and probably truthfully, "My sorcery has only been the influence of a strong mind over a weak one." Bigotry, however, triumphed over common sense, and the favourite was condemned as a sorceress, and was burnt at the stake. Among the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders the image was known as a "corp creadh," and was sometimes placed in running water, so that as the clay was slowly washed away, the intended victim's health and strength might be gradually destroyed. Little more than twenty years ago such a "corp creadh" was found in an Inverness stream; its clay body was bestuck with pins, human nails, and birds' claws. Another similar clay image figured in the Inverness police-court so late as 1883.

Horace has several allusions to bird-lore. In the ode to Galatea, he says:

I, with my sage forecasting skill,
For her I love and fear for will,
By my strong prayers' resistless force,
Call from the East the raven hoarse,
Ere, scenting rain at hand, again
It seek its haunts amid the fen.

In the same ode the woodpecker is mentioned as a bird of ill omen—the "boding jay" of Sir T. Martin's version of Horace. There are one or two allusions to the "vagrant crow" as a fore-teller of rain. Another bird allusion is to the cuckoo, a bird that figures very largely in popular lore throughout Europe. Horace tells us how a passer-by called "Cuckoo, cuckoo!" to a vine-dresser whose vines were untrimmed, and roused him to fierce indignation and the discharge of a torrent of bad language. A man whose vines were not trimmed by the time of the cuckoo's arrival was considered a sluggard, and the cry of "Cuckoo!" was therefore an ingenious form of insult.

Among other items of belief and practice in the days of Horace which have lasted into modern times, sometimes with con-

siderable variation, may be mentioned the sacredness of boundaries, long kept in mind in England by the annual perambulation of parish bounds; the observance of birthdays; the belief in the evil eye; the sacredness of fountains and wells, and of salt; the marking of lucky days with a white stone, long proverbial with us; the use of votive offerings and tablets; and the special significance attached to the number three.

Besides these, Horatian folk-lore includes one or two rather curious items that seem quite unknown in modern belief. Thus we learn from passages in the "Satires," that cocks are hatched from long, and hens from round eggs; that shell-fish are best at the time of the new moon; and that dreams are true after midnight. With reference to dreams, Horace alludes to Homer's description of the two gates in the House of Sleep: the one of horn, from which come dreams that are true; the other of ivory, from which come those that are false:

Mere incorporeal films of dream,
Which through sleep's ivory portal stream.

"APARTMENTS, FURNISHED."**A COMPLETE STORY.**

MY name is Pybus—Jane Elizabeth Pybus—and I live in a quiet street within easy reach of 'bus or tram at the Elephant. These facts have nothing to do with the story I am going to tell, but I mention them in my own interest, because I have rooms to let, and advertisement is the soul of business. It is just possible that any one reading this account of how those rooms come to be empty might think they would suit him—mind, I say emphatically him—in which case he can apply to the editor for further information.

Since the Free Libraries came up I have read a lot of novels, but though there is a landlady in most of them, who is either a sort of angel in a humble way or very much the other thing, according to the nature of the plot and the number of the volumes in which she lets to the hero, or heroine, or both, if married and not yet at the end of their troubles, I have never yet found one in which things are looked at from the landlady's point of view.

I suppose this is natural, because most novelists have been in love, and have taken lodgings, too, in their time, though few have let them; but no one can call it fair, and, though fear of cramp in the

fingers alone is enough to prevent me from trying to write a novel, I think it is time a landlady had her say, so don't be disappointed if you find that this is what my nephew, the solicitor's clerk, calls an "ex parte" statement, the party in this case being a plain, elderly body of fifty or so, with a house of her own and a little something in Consols, who supplements her income by letting on her ground-floor a bed and sitting-room communicating, and on her first a comfortably furnished bed-sitting room.

My ground-floor rooms were let, and had been for long enough, to Mr. John Whittingham, cashier in the Newington Branch of the Central and General Bank; but my first-floor was empty, and the card in the window, when just about eleven in the morning, two years ago almost to the day of writing, comes a ring at the bell.

I don't keep a girl, so I went to the door and found a young woman there.

Now, some people object to women as lodgers. I didn't, then, providing they were respectable, and at this present minute I would as soon have a married couple without encumbrances—encumbrances say the advertisements, arrows in the hand of a giant said the Psalmist; different points of view again, you see—as anybody. The woman, ten to one, will do half her own work, and the man is far more likely to come in sober when he has a wife waiting for him; he can't give notice to let her speak her mind ever so free.

Any one could see this girl was respectable, though she looked as pert as you please. She was pretty, too, in spite of her pertness—which I set down chiefly to the unbecomingness of the nose-nippers she wore.

"You have rooms to let?" she said, speaking as if her time was precious.

"Yes, madam," I replied—a nice convenient word that "madam," which I for one thank the drapers' assistants for introducing; with the bits of things that get married nowadays, you never know whether "miss" is safe. "A room, that is. Will you please to step inside?"

"Oh! but how much is it a week?" she asked without offering to pass the doorstep. "If it's more than I can afford to pay, it's no use wasting my time and yours by looking at it."

I liked that. People who don't care much what they pay often care less how long they owe it.

"Seven-and-six for one person," I replied. "You and your husband, or you and a friend, ten shillings."

"Oh! I am not married," she said, blushing, as if being a single woman was something to be ashamed of, "and I shall be quite alone."

She came in as soon as I mentioned the terms, and I knew that I was as good as let. No one that could afford to pay the money ever looked at my rooms without taking them, and no one who has taken them ever left through any fault of mine. When they go, it's through getting married, or taking a country situation, or some such misfortune, for I do my best to make them comfortable. I claim no credit for it, mind; it's just a matter of business with me; for if you make a man comfortable he won't be half so keen on setting up a house and wife of his own.

As I expected, when she had had a good look round, and pried into all the holes and corners a man would never notice, she said she'd take the room.

"If," she adds, "you can give me a satisfactory reference."

Well, I need hardly say I didn't expect that—me give her, mind you!—but as I liked the look of her, and the room had been empty some time, I humoured her.

"Why, of course, miss," I said. "There's my gentleman lodger, Mr. Whittingham, is cashier in the Central just round the corner, and has been with me for years; or, if you prefer it, the parson of the parish."

"Oh, that will do nicely, thank you!" she replied, blushing again, as well she might, at having asked such a ridiculous thing. Who ever heard of references being wanted from a householder? "My name is Maitland, and I can refer you to—"

"Oh! no, miss, thank you," I interrupted, hoping to make her feel ashamed of herself. "There isn't the least need, I assure you."

But she persisted in giving me the names of two clergymen down in the country. And much good they did me.

Would you believe that that girl had the impudence or the ignorance—I don't know which—to walk round to Mr. Whittingham and ask if mine was a respectable house? At least, I suppose that's what she asked; though when he came in to his tea and let out that she had been he didn't say so. It was all, "Who is she, Miss Pybus? What is she? How does she come to be alone in London?"

"Now, Mr. Whittingham," I said, "how should I know? If you ask me to guess I should say she was a teacher in the Board School. She's pert enough, and as for being alone, if those school-teachers can't take care of themselves, who can?"

I could tell he had been struck with her, of course. When a man admires a girl the first thing he thinks of is that she ought to have some one to look after her—himself for choice—but I wasn't afraid that anything serious would come of it, Mr. Whittingham being well over thirty, and therefore, as I supposed, tolerably safe not to make a fool of himself in the matrimonial way for many years to come.

Not till next morning did I find out that Miss Maitland wasn't in the Board School. Directly after breakfast she went out, to work as I thought, but before ten o'clock she was in again.

"Lor, miss," I said, "school's never out yet!"

"School?" she replied, looking surprised. "I don't know, I'm sure, Miss Pybus. I don't go to school. I am a journalist."

"Oh! indeed, miss," I said, taken aback in my turn, "and what journal might you represent?"

"At present," she replied, blushing again—such a girl to blush as she was in those early days I never did see—"I am unattached."

Thinks I to myself that's only another word for unemployed, my lady; I wonder how you mean to pay your rent? But pay it she did regularly, and though, so long as it was paid, where she got the money was no business of mine, I was certain that it wasn't from the newspapers or yet the magazines. She used to divide her time between running round the town seeking what she called impressions and writing them down when found. Then she sent them off to editors, and after a while they came back. When we got to know each other better, she gave me a lot of them to read, and really I can't blame the editors. There was just nothing in them—the impressions, I mean—and that's a fact. The grammar was all right and so was the spelling, while the handwriting was quite pretty; but such ideas as there were had a familiar, second-hand sort of look even to me.

"My father," she told me, "knew the editor of the 'Pugaley Independent' very well, and the 'Independent' used to print almost anything I wrote, so I know that

influence must have a lot to do with it. I wish I knew some London editors."

"I am sure I wish you did, miss, if it would do you any good," I said, "but as you don't, you might take up something that would pay better than this writing."

"Pay!" she exclaimed, looking quite indignant. "I don't write for mere pay, Miss Pybus. I want fame, and I will win it if I write till I die."

Quite like the heroine of a novel, but I could have shaken her all the same. She had been with me nearly a year then, and I was sure she must be running short of money, because for months she hadn't bought so much as a new pair of gloves; and her boots, as I saw when I cleaned them, were getting that bad they were almost past mending. Therefore, being sorry for the girl, I hadn't mentioned the taking something up without having the something in my mind. I had discovered that she could play quite nicely, and if she had been a bit more humble-minded I was going to tell her that I could find her some pupils for music, besides an engagement or two to play at quiet, friendly parties, where she would have been received just the same as a guest, and have brought away a few shillings more than she went with; but after that, if I had spoken at all it would have been sharply, and I didn't want to quarrel with her.

For one thing, she was my lodger and paying me regularly enough so far, and for another, there was my birthday coming on, when I always give a little party myself, and I wanted her to play for us. Ails in the way of thinking herself too good to associate with me or the company I kept she never did assume, and when I mentioned the party a day or two later, she said she would be delighted to come. Come she did, and my party she spoilt as far as I was concerned.

A nicer party than that one might have been I don't think I ever did have. There was my brother Richard, the compositor, his wife and two children—that is, if you can call them children when one, as I have said, is a solicitor's clerk, and the other is in the dressmaking—another brother, William, and his wife, who keep a pork-butcher's shop, my sister Maria, who married a Mr. Brabble in the undertaking, and quite a large way, with their three—two girls and a boy—and Mr. Whittingham—I couldn't, even if I had wanted, have left him out, because we used his room, which has the piano in it.

Now, my nephew Fred, the solicitor's clerk, is enough in himself to keep any party lively. Sing! There isn't anything going at the halls he can't sing, and as for a round game, what with his jokes and his tricks there's that much noise you can't hear yourself speak, while his sister Ada, in a ladylike way, is just as good fun.

My brother William favours those two more plainly than is always pleasant when Maria is there, but she knows better than to show temper in my house, besides which, as I always tell her, if William should allow his feelings to get the better of his sense of justice to the detriment of her three, I'll make it up to them—at least, if I am spared to survive William—which, as he is a fleshy man, uncommonly partial to his own sausages, is more than likely.

I must say, though, that Maria's three, though as good children as ever were, are not to my mind the best of company. Whether it's the influence of the business they can't shake off, or natural melancholy inherited from Brabble, who is one of the most miserable-looking men I ever saw, I don't know, but they are a great contrast to Fred and Ada. The only amusement they care anything about is dancing—Fred tells me they brighten up at a dance most surprisingly—and dance in my front room they can't or shan't, either. No matter, though, they are good children, as I have said, and no one need think I shall remember their little faults of manner in my will.

It was at tea that it first struck me what a foolish thing I had done when I let Miss Maitland into my house, and it was the eyes she made at Mr. Whittingham that opened mine to my folly. They didn't say much, not to each other, though they were as sociable and chatty with the rest of the company as any one could wish, but they looked a lot. Now, a cat may look at a king, as the saying is, but not, I conclude, as if she thought the king was cream and she could eat him, and that's how Miss Maitland looked at Mr. Whittingham—and how he looked at her for that matter. That there was something between them was obvious, not only to me, but to the whole table.

"Jane," said Richard's wife the first chance she got of talking to me quietly, "you mark my words, you'll be losing your prize lodger soon."

"No fear," I replied, speaking braver than I felt, and rather short because I knew she was jealous of him stopping so

long. "I still buy my own groceries, Mary Ann, and my cat has her ha'porth daily from one-legged Jimmy."

This must have touched her, because she always counts on her lodgers finding her in sugar, if not tea, and she lost a lady and gentleman who, though he was in the theatrical line, were as homely, decent people as you could wish to see, simply because her "cat" made so free with their cold meat; but she never winced.

"No doubt, Jane," she said; "but he'll be getting married soon for all that. Of course you don't know much about it, but any one that's had the pleasure of being courted can see he's clean gone on that Miss Maitland."

Then, luckily for the harmony of the evening, we were interrupted. I trust I know the duties of hospitality and how to behave civilly to my guests, but Mary Ann would have had a piece of my mind for all that if Fred hadn't come to ask if he could have one of my dresses and a cap to sing some tomfoolery or other in character.

Just for a bit I did hope Fred might cut Mr. Whittingham out, but Miss Maitland somehow didn't seem to appreciate Fred, though he was as usual taken with a fresh face, and when he found he made no impression he soon made his peace with his old flame, his cousin Eliza, Maria's second girl.

But really I haven't the heart to write down all that happened at that miserable party—miserable, I mean, for me. The others all said they enjoyed themselves even more than usual, and, as it was two o'clock before Maria, who is always fidgety, began to talk about going, I believed them, especially as if they hadn't enjoyed themselves, it must have been their own fault. Everything to eat and drink was provided of the best, and, not being myself a judge of tobacco, I had asked Mr. Whittingham to buy me a dozen of the nicest twopenny cigars to be had in London, which, Fred said, smoked better than any twopenny he ever lit, though what he meant by grinning and winking at Mr. W. about them I don't know.

As for amusement, Fred worked his hardest, and I will do Miss Maitland the justice to say she played whenever and whatever she was asked, besides taking a lot of trouble to accompany Fred, who is very particular about the time, and the key, and that sort of thing. Then Mr.

Whittingham exerted himself more than he had ever done before, and altogether it was a great success, which I should have enjoyed as much as any of them, but for the trouble in my mind.

Not long after that party, Mr. Whittingham left the bank, and didn't seem to trouble himself much about finding a new situation either. When Miss Maitland would let him, he went about the town with her, seeking impressions, I suppose; but that didn't last long, because he went away for three months—keeping on his rooms, mind you—and while he was away she fell ill.

"How has this young lady been living, Miss Pybus?" asked the doctor I called in, whether she liked it or not, as soon as I saw that it was serious.

"Well, sir," I replied, "except that she has plain bread and butter breakfasts and teas, I really can't tell you."

"You don't happen to know what sort of a dinner she has?" he asked.

"No, sir, I do not," I replied. "She usually dines out."

"And with Duke Humphrey, I expect," he said, shaking his head. "Now, mind, Miss Pybus, she is to have plenty of nourishing food—mutton broth, port wine, and all that sort of thing. Don't you ask her whether she'll have this or that, but just get it ready."

Now, isn't that just like a doctor? The patient is to have this and have that, but never a word said about where the money is to come from. That Miss Maitland was just about at the end of her tether I had thought for some time, and the doctor putting her illness down chiefly to her having half-starved herself—without my knowledge, mind you—made me as sure of it as you can be of anything in this uncertain world. Nevertheless, I did my best for her, and saw that she wanted for nothing. Though I was vexed I had ever let her enter my door, I liked the girl, and for more than a month I never sent in a bill, as the poor thing was in a sort of low fever, and not fit to be worried. I began to have hopes, too, that I had made a mistake about her and Mr. Whittingham. She kept talking as if he had gone away because of her, and she certainly never had a letter from him.

Just as she was pulling round a bit, though, back comes Mr. Whittingham, and a fine stew he was in when he found how she was.

"I ought not to have gone away, Miss

Pybus," he said. "She's not able to take care of herself."

Now, if a girl of one-and-twenty who comes up to London to win fame as a journalist isn't able to take care of herself well enough to get plenty to eat, she had best stay down in the country, I think, and so I told him.

"Do you mean to say she has been starving?" he asked.

"Not likely, Mr. Whittingham," I replied. "Not since her food's been under my control, at least; but the doctor did say she had let herself run down terribly low, partly, I take it, through want of money, and partly through want of sense."

Then I told him about the music pupils, and he said she was a noble girl. I can't see it myself. Sheer obstinacy, I call it, to be so mad after fame as to refuse work by which she might have earned enough to buy herself proper food.

He said, besides, that she was to have the best of everything, and he would pay for it, and the very next time the doctor came in he called him into his sitting-room, where he stayed a time I hope, for his own sake, he remembered to charge for.

A day or two later my gentleman asked if he could see Miss Maitland, and when I told her she blushed all over her white face, and said, "Yes, she would see him." She was sitting all propped up with pillows in a big easy-chair when he came in—of course, I stayed in the room for propriety's sake—and he took her hand, which he held that long that I thought he never meant to let go. Then they went through some more of that eye-business they had spoilt my party with, only she hadn't her nose-pinchers on, and her eyes looked a lot larger by contrast with her thin face, and then he murmured: "Lucy, have you changed your mind?" and she murmured: "Yes, John."

I couldn't help feeling some sympathy for them, she being ill and he out of a situation, but, as it turned out, I needn't have wasted it. He had left the bank of his own accord, and because he had come into a fortune, while as for her, I doubt whether fretting, because he had gone away when she refused him the first time, hadn't as much to do with her illness as going without her dinner, and then worrying over her writing on an empty stomach.

I didn't know then there had been a first time, but I found out afterwards that he had proposed to her before and that

she had rejected him, because she thought married life would interfere with her pursuit of fame. It would have served her right, wouldn't it, if he had never come back?

Not for a moment did I dream, when I knew of his fortune, that they would be content to begin in lodgings. Nothing less than a house on the Clapham Road would suit miss, if you please, and the furniture that went in it would have done you good to see.

No, I didn't quarrel with them—thank goodness I can keep my feelings under control—nor did they come to me hand-in-hand as lodgers about to marry would have done in a novel and tell me their family histories. All I know is that she seemed to have no relations, so she stayed on with me until the wedding, which took place as soon as she was well.

When they came back from their honeymoon they gave a house-warming party, and invited all those that were at mine; and, though they were my own relations, all of them talked as if I ought to be very thankful I had been the means of bringing the two together.

"Quite romantic," says Maria, and, perhaps, it may be, but I am a practical woman, and every time I see the "Apartments, Furnished" card in my window I make up my mind afresh there shall be no more such romantic goings on in my house.

MISS LATIMER OF BRYANS.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE.

Author of "Alexia," "Red Towers," "The Little One," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. THE TOLLING BELL.

GEOFFREY started that night by train to Liverpool, and Porphyria, two days later, took home her secret to Bryans. As she could not have mentioned his name without betraying herself and him, which she was quite resolved not to do, Mr. and Mrs. Cantillon were left in ignorance of his visit. The Rector was half sorry, half relieved, that his friend should have gone away without another word. Fanny had never thought that he would be foolish or presumptuous enough to come, and laughed gently at her husband on the subject. It was lucky, she said, for himself and for other people, that all the world was not so sentimental.

"You don't believe in true love, then, Fanny!" said the poor Rector, between a smile and a sigh.

"My dear, I believe in the fitness of things," said Mrs. Cantillon reprovingly.

Porphyria herself, to say the truth, was a little frightened at what she had done. It seemed as if Geoffrey Thorne in those parting moments, by right of his great love for her, had been gifted with some mysterious power which made him invincible. Poppy in her right mind, even for the sake of sending him away happy, would hardly have bound herself by what now looked most seriously like an engagement. At that moment the strength of his love had been so great that she felt as if she loved him in return. When he was gone, and that magnetic power had faded to a memory, she knew that liking, admiration, gratitude, pity, the vague acknowledgement of some sort of claim, had all crowded together on her side to represent love. She had felt so tired and so lonely too. It had been comforting to know that she might lay her fate in hands so strong and loving. It was impossible to doubt Geoffrey. The devotion he gave her now would last their lives, she knew. She even knew that if he had had a little more self-confidence, in that supreme moment, he need not have kept to his plan of going to America at all. A very complete victory lay within his grasp just then, if he had not been too much dazzled to see it. That night at the hotel, soon after he was gone, there had even flashed into her mind the possibility of stopping him. "Why should I be alone and sad for a year?"

By the next morning this hardly existing wish had passed for ever; a year began to seem only too short, and by the time she reached Bryans the personality of Geoffrey's relations began to seem much clearer to her than his own. Mr. Thorne, excellent, ordinary; Frank, unimaginable as a brother-in-law; Lucy, certainly the best of them, but rough, loud-voiced, a true woman of her kind, but not of Poppy's. With those three, of course, she had scarcely an idea in common. The more these figures impressed themselves upon her mind, the more strongly she felt that marriage into such a family must be out of the question without a love for one of its sons which she did not feel.

Yet her resolution was not in the least weakened. She had told Geoffrey to come back to her in a year. Unasked, in a

literal sense—for the second time in her life, though she did not know it—she had given him what amounted to a promise. And to break that promise, it seemed to her, would be a very much deeper degradation than to marry a yeoman's son. If Geoffrey Thorne came back to claim her, she would marry him—yes, and in Bryans Church, and with no other idea than to live on at Bryans. The county would be amused, would turn its back, perhaps—let it. Why should she waste a thought on people who would be at her feet if she married a millionaire, no matter what his father might have been? Aunt Fanny? Well, she would get over it in time; and the Rector, Poppy shrewdly guessed, would be to a certain extent on her side. He would think it his duty to disapprove; but he loved Geoffrey.

All these things arranged, disarranged, rearranged themselves in Poppy's head through the windy days of late October, while the beeches of Bryans were once more clothing themselves in flame. She was alone at the great house, and not sorry to be alone, though her aunt tried to persuade her that it was impossible, and that she ought to live at the Rectory, as Mr. Cantillon would not listen to the alternative plan of moving his goods to the Court.

Poppy lived chiefly in her own old rooms upstairs, where she had the company of Geoffrey's works of art, his sketch of Herzheim, and his picture of Maggie. Unlike some people, Poppy was never inclined to wish that picture away. She could look at it without resentment or pain. Sometimes she even wondered why, and asked herself if she were made of ice or stone, that all the past story, so painful and strange, should only seem to affect her as a story, not as a real present pain. It was perhaps because the suddenness of the shock which killed her faith in Arthur had had a simply numbing effect on a nature which had never before known what it was to be deceived. It was certain that not even a flush of anger was called up by the thought of those two and their treason. She did not feel unkindly towards them; they had passed out of her life for ever, her lover and her friend. She would even have been glad to hear their names, to know where they were, if they were happy. But naturally no one mentioned them to her, and she could not ask. Once she thought, "When Geoffrey comes back, I will ask him. He will find out everything I want to know."

Thus a certain confidence in the future, based on the character of that faithful servant whom she had promised to reward, mingled itself with a more positive dread, this again finding itself resisted by all the honour and strength that Poppy's ancestors had left her. In this curious state of mind, very silent and dreamy, she spent the first few days after her return to Bryans.

She went out very little, except to her aunt's house. Sometimes, leaving the little lady in the drawing-room among her china, which wanted constant rearrangement, she would pace up and down the garden by the Rector's side among the late roses, between the tall Michaelmas daisies and the lingering asters and chrysanthemums, consulting him about new cottages she wished to build, then gradually falling into dreamy, forgetful silences, so that he found his wise answers and good suggestions thrown away on what had seemed just a moment before such a practical lady of the manor.

Once or twice, at these times, if the Rector had only known it, Geoffrey's name almost escaped her; she was on the edge of making his future a positive fact by telling her old friend of the promise which she had half made and meant to keep. But something silenced her; perhaps, though it may seem unworthy, a certain pride and shame; perhaps a fear of losing, through some energetic action of Aunt Fanny's prejudices, a prospect, a subject of thought, which was not without its sweetness; perhaps, too, the knowledge that trusting one person with such a secret meant telling all her little world, and in it his relations. She and her secret were safer alone, though sometimes her head ached with wistful, puzzled thinking, when she spent long hours at her sitting-room window, looking down the gold-touched avenue, or under the great trees on the garden terrace that faced the sunset.

By the end of the week the winds had calmed down, and the first Sunday after her return was a quiet day with a sky of faint but cloudless blue, soft autumn mists lying about the lower ground of the park, crimson hawthorns shining with innumerable sparkles of light, yellow leaves floating down in the avenue. Poppy went alone through the wood to meet her aunt and to walk to church with her. The peace of nature made her feel peaceful. She thought of Geoffrey without disturbance, even as she passed old Church Corner, gloomy

and shuttered up, for no one lived there now. She thought of all that he had done for her; how worthy he was of anything she could do for him. She wondered if, under those new skies, more blue perhaps than these, Geoffrey was thinking of her, and she answered her own question without the possibility of a doubt. It was one of Geoffrey's fortunate moments, and he might have been happy if he could have seen the smile that touched his lady's lips as she turned into the Rector's field and went down towards the bridge and the willow-shaded water; a smile at her own question, for who could possess her lover's thoughts if not she?

Then suddenly—it was as if a cold cloud shadowed the field and dimmed the sky—the church bells ceased chiming, and one of them, the oldest, the deepest in voice, began to toll.

Poppy stopped short on her way down the field. In the tone of that bell there was something so solemn, so mournful, as to be almost overwhelming; and it seemed to linger and to vibrate in the quiet air, between the slopes of the village. For whom it might be tolling she had no idea; she had not heard of any serious illness among the people. Aunt Fanny might know; she was coming over the bridge now, and Poppy moved on again more quickly to meet her. But she came with a question.

"Why is the bell tolling, Poppy, do you know? Who can it be? The Rector knew nothing when he went to the school. I do hope it is nobody he cares much about, poor dear!"

As Poppy turned back with her, and they walked up to the gate, and along the road towards the church, they were both discussing the probabilities as to the various infirm old men and women in Bryans. It seemed almost certain that one of these must have been released suddenly from the fretful burden of years.

One or two groups near the churchyard gate looked grave enough, and people were whispering together; but Mrs. Cantillon saw the Rector crossing the churchyard from the school, and hurried to overtake him. Poppy followed her a few yards behind. The solemn notes of the bell seemed to fill the air, to strike upon her brain. Afterwards she was sure that she had known, long before she heard them, the few words which the Rector, with a white face, turned round to say to his wife, and which she, shocked and almost breath-

less, repeated to her niece as they entered the porch together.

"Geoffrey Thorne is dead."

Poppy said nothing. She turned sick and almost faint, and stretched out her hand blindly to the rough stone of the wall. Darkness was before her eyes, the figures round her swam, and for a moment she felt as if she was falling, falling through measureless depths of dreary cold and pain. In reality she neither fell nor fainted, but recovered almost instantly from the sudden shock, and walked after her aunt into the church, with trembling, uncertain steps, it is true, but even more upright, more stately than usual, white and stiff, with mouth firmly set and eyes cast down. The Bryans people looked at her curiously; most of them had hardly seen her since her return; hardly, indeed, since the catastrophe a few months before. They thought her sadly changed; putting down, as was natural, her white looks to that past and hopeless trouble, and certainly not tracing it to the same cause as the emptiness of Mr. Thorne's pew.

It was no wonder that the Rector's voice trembled, and often nearly failed altogether. He did not allude to the news which had only reached him a few minutes before the service began; but that morning in church was remembered long and long by the people of Bryans. No funeral hymns or words of regret could have deepened its solemnity. A feeling much more eloquent because unexpressed seemed to brood over the vacant places, to spread earnestness not always belonging to village church-goers among those who had known Geoffrey, who could remember him, many of them, from his restless boyhood to this last unfortunate winter. The fact that no one knew any particulars seemed to deepen the strain, and it was almost a relief when the service was over, even if the organist, a young man who had admired Geoffrey, and envied his artistic power, brought tears to some eyes by breaking suddenly into Chopin's "Funeral March," that most heartrending of music.

At the first cry of those mournful spirits Miss Latimer got up and left the church, quite unconscious of the staring eyes of the village children, unaccustomed to see her tall figure amongst them as they hurried down to the gate. She walked on alone to the Rector's field, and down to the bridge, and up the path to his garden. There she paced up and down the path, waiting; frowning, with eyes fixed on the

gravel at her feet, in the vain effort to realise what Aunt Fanny had said; while suddenly again, as if bringing the proof she wanted, that deep old bell resumed its solemn tolling.

Once or twice Poppy spoke to herself. The first time she said, "Then I am free." A moment after she added, "Geoffrey, if you would come back to me now!"

The bell went on tolling; not a leaf moved on the quiet trees, and the calm blue sky looked down with a cold and peaceful indifference. So he was lying now, cold, peaceful, indifferent, the man in whom, hardly more than a week ago, life and love had been so strong as almost to compel the response he wanted. Was it really possible?

Perhaps Poppy had been alone for ten minutes, when Mr. and Mrs. Cantillon came slowly in at the lower gate of the garden. Aunt Fanny looked very grave and sympathetic; the Rector was pale, his eyes were dim, and he could hardly speak without tears.

"You must really have some luncheon first, dear," said Mrs. Cantillon. "Poppy, he is unreasonable. He wanted to start off to Sutton Bryans directly the service was over—such a trying visit—and he so upset by this sad news that he could hardly get through the sermon!"

Poppy lifted her eyes and looked at Mr. Cantillon with a curious steadiness. She tried to speak, but only succeeded in saying:

"Is it true? Tell me——"

"I don't suppose the poor Thornes know much yet," he answered. "As far as I can understand, it happened the day before the steamer reached New York. A child fell overboard in stormy weather, and he, poor fellow, saw it first and jumped in. They rescued the child but not him. Poor Geoffrey—dear fellow!"

"Don't, Henry!" cried Mrs. Cantillon. "Well, it was a brave action, and after all, perhaps the poor man had not so very much to live for. I don't mean that he might not have got on very well in America, and perhaps succeeded better in farming than in painting. However," she concluded, with a little air of resignation, "it was not to be."

"Listen, Aunt Fanny," said Porphyria, in so strangely earnest a tone that they both turned towards her, forgetting everything else for the moment. "I wish you both to know that Geoffrey Thorne had something to live for. He came to see me

in London, to say good-bye. He wrote to me first, and I shall always keep his letter. Before he went I told him that he might come back in a year. Do you understand me as he did? I told him I would promise nothing—but it was a promise, all the same."

"Poppy, what do you mean?" exclaimed her aunt in breathless amazement. "You must be out of your mind! You did not care for that man. You never told us."

"No, I knew what you would say, and I could not change my mind, so it was best to tell nobody. Whether I cared for Geoffrey Thorne, time would have proved. I could be sure of one thing, for the first and only time in my life, Aunt Fanny—he cared for me."

The little lady's cheeks became crimson, and her eyes gleamed with indignation. Henry Cantillon laid his hand on her arm to quiet her, but she would not be quieted.

"Poppy, how can you, how can you speak so!" she cried. "Haven't we all been punished enough? I am sure I have had enough misery, without hearing you say with your own lips that you meant to disgrace us all, just because a poor unfortunate man happened to care for you. Really you make me say that Providence has stepped in to save you from your own madness."

"Hush, Fanny; say no more," the Rector broke in, with such positive command that his wife walked suddenly away and left them.

Then he stood looking silently at Porphyria. He was strongly moved, and in his delicate face might be read admiration mixed with sorrow, regret, and yet relief.

"My dear child," he murmured under his breath.

"You knew, Uncle Henry," she said. "You knew he was worth all of us put together."

"Yes, I knew," said the Rector, with a deep sigh. "And yet—and yet, my dear——"

The bell went on tolling.

CHAPTER XXXIX. MISS LATIMER.

PORPHYRIA went home alone, and spent the afternoon alone on her terrace. She did not go back into the house till five o'clock, till after the sun had sunk, a red ball, behind the distant trees, and blue mists were creeping up from the river and from the damp hollows of the path. Then twilight hurried on, though delayed by a

rosy after-glow which came up from the north and overspread the sky, brightening the dull autumnal world with a magic flush which seemed hardly the work of nature as England knows her.

This light had not died away when Miss Latimer sent to her old coachman and ordered the pony-cart to be brought round at once. She wished West to go with her himself. West could only obey, though privately of opinion that for no one else in the world would he have consented to spoil his Sunday evening. And he was glad that such humours did not often take Miss Latimer. It was very kind of her, of course, to drive over so soon to Sutton Bryans, but in West's opinion, confided to Mrs. Arch, she would have been wiser to wait till Monday. The Thornes were people who kept themselves to themselves pretty well, and cared at no time for much of their neighbours' company; was it likely they would want visitors the very day such sad news had reached them?

"You let our young lady please herself, Mr. West," retorted Mrs. Arch. "She knows better than you nor me."

It did not occur to Miss Latimer to ask their opinion. She drove Bobby through the village, West sitting in discreet if slightly injured silence, passing the church just as the bells began to chime for evening service. It was almost dark by the time that Bobby's swift feet brought her to the gate of the old farm. There were lights in several of the windows, and Lucy Thorne, pacing restlessly up and down outside, stood still as the wheels came flying up the road. The light from the door, which stood open, fell full on the small, stiff, upright figure, the plain dark gown, the white, fixed face, the dark eyes full of angry and hopeless grief.

For Lucy there was no comfort. Her brother Geoffrey, little as she saw of him, had been the romance, the ornament, the brightness of her life. Through those last months, the more she had disagreed with him and disapproved of his doings the better she had loved him. She had been proud of his art, of his good looks, of his refinement; and even his long, hopeless attachment seemed to Lucy to lift him far above the ordinary level of men she knew. She had even ceased to regret such a waste of his best feelings, since Miss Latimer, by her generosity towards Maggie, had proved that her nobleness was not all on the outside.

Yet now in the first bitterness of grief it was natural that Lucy should shrink with almost passionate repugnance from the woman who in simple truth had spoilt her brother's life.

She was too proud to turn away. Standing there stonily, she allowed Porphyria to stop her pony and get out of the carriage close by, though all the time she asked herself why people in trouble could not be left alone. Dear Mr. Cantillon, that afternoon, had certainly not gained much by his visit. Her father had had nothing to say. Frank had gone out almost immediately. She had talked a little because she must, but had not shown a spark of feeling. As for tears, she hardly knew what they were, and certainly now their very source was dried up within her. What was there to say, or think, or feel? Geoffrey was gone, and would never come back, never. She could not share her old recollections with anybody. Her father and Frank had never understood or cared for him as she did. Now, after-tea, they had gone out on their business as usual; and the house stifled Lucy. She could not go to church to be stared at. If it had not been for her many duties she would have liked to go away altogether to some lonely corner of the fields, to stay out all night under the stars that were now shining. Of course nobody could understand those feelings, and Lucy knew that she would not give way to them, and would go on doing her daily work as steadily as ever, with only one difference—that the post would never bring a letter from Geoffrey, that he would never come home again.

All would become easy enough, no doubt, and she had only one wish now—to know further particulars of his death, and the child's name for whom his life was given. It seemed a strange end to all his ambitions—ambition in art, ambition in love—all the high aspirations of a young man's life, mistaken, perhaps, but never unworthy. Why was it? To such a question Lucy could find no answer. But through the stunned death of her thoughts and feelings there shot a keen thrill of pain when Porphyria came up to her, tall, slight, fair in the twilight, and took her hand, and then instantly drew her closer, and touched her cheek with cold lips.

Lucy shrank and almost cried out, but turned silently and led the way into the house, along the broad passage, in at the open door of the old living-room.

It was empty, even of dogs; the door

into the garden, which generally stood open, was shut, and there was no light but that of an uncertain, flickering fire. Lucy pointed to a chair, and her manner was not polite or gentle. She went to put more coals on the fire, while Porphyria, as pale as herself, stood with one hand on the chair and looked on.

"Won't you sit down, Miss Latimer?" said Lucy harshly.

Poppy sat down. Her hostess sat down too. It was very plain that she was asking herself: "Why has this woman come here? Could she possibly think we wanted her?"

Poppy, however, was thinking so little of her own position, and so much of Geoffrey and his sister, that no consciousness of this kind troubled her. She could not flatter herself that Lucy Thorne was glad to see her, that was hardly to be expected; but she could carry out her own resolve that Geoffrey's memory should be honoured.

"Will you tell me, Miss Thorne," she began, in tones so sweet that no one could have been angry, "if his drawings are here?"

Lucy lifted her head and stared. She almost said, "What business is that of yours?" and in fact the word "what" had escaped her, when something softened her astonishment and wrath.

She had been rude probably to every one else in Bryans, but never yet to Miss Latimer. There was always something in Poppy, a gentle frankness, a dignity without self-assertion, which checked the roughest and boldest tongue; and Lucy, with all her peculiarities, would have scorned not to pay honour where it was due. So this strangely sounding question was answered by the one word, "Yes."

"And you will keep them here?" said Poppy, very low.

"I shall keep them here," Lucy growled in reply.

"Will you let me come and see them sometimes? You know, I can never forget him."

There was a dead silence. They could hear, beyond the crackling of the fire, sounds outside of Bobby's impatience as he stamped and pawed the ground. Porphyria, lifting her eyes slowly to her companion's face, saw upon it a curiously cold and bitter smile, in which indeed she might have read volumes of accusation, mixed with sad advice to her ladyship to "pray heaven for a human heart." What did it matter to Geoffrey whether Miss Latimer remembered or forgot him?

Poppy did not quite read all this, but she saw that Lucy Thorne despised her poor attempt at something which should be more than common sympathy—that she almost, indeed, denied her right to speak at all.

Her task seemed very difficult. She had come, led by an irresistible instinct, with a certain confidence that Geoffrey's sister must understand her, with a feeling that she was bound in honour to let Geoffrey's relations know what they would have known if he had lived to return to them. No question as to the wisdom of her promise, as to whether she might or did regret it, must intrude here; and if there was any temptation to escape all consequence of her rashness by silence now, it only rose up to be conquered.

She withdrew her eyes from Lucy's stern face and fixed them on the small flames that were leaping up under the great, dark chimney. She sat very straight in her high-backed chair, her hands folded, the fingers white from the tightness with which they were pressed together. Her heart beat fast, but the stillness of her pale face gave no idea of the effort with which she spoke. She looked just then, one may fancy, like the beautiful picture of her great-aunt, Miss Elizabeth Latimer, who never married because she never met the man she could feel to be her equal. This proud lady might very well be displeased at the comparison, for what was her descendant doing here by firelight in this old farmhouse kitchen? If Porphyria had shown herself, at a moment of excitement, a very foolish, romantic woman, was that any reason why she should forget all self-respect, ignore all self-preservation, and place her fine old name at the mercy of those Thornes, who would hardly have presumed to sit down in her great-aunt's presence? Different ages have different ideals, and Porphyria might have found self-scorn a worse thing to bear.

"I have something to tell you," she said to Lucy, who looked at first as if she scarcely cared to listen, but was soon gazing in incredulous, admiring surprise. "You remember what you said to me one day about your brother Geoffrey—you told me that he had cared a long time—it was not quite news. I had seen something in the winter which made me uneasy, and I only wish I had known it long before, and I should never have consented to his doing all he did for me. I think now I

must have been very stupid, and you, if you knew all, must have thought me very horrid too, but I won't go back to all that now. I have something to tell you beyond all that. When we were in London the other day Mr. Cantillon met him, and he told him that he was going, and the next afternoon I had a letter from him, and then he came himself to say 'Good-bye.' I am not sure that I ought to have said what I did; honestly, I have been a little sorry since, because it frightened me. I believe it was selfishness, because," her voice broke and nearly failed, and it was not the fire that flushed her face rosy-red, "it made me happy to know that he cared for me so much, and he was so good, one trusted him so. But I don't think I treated him quite fairly, you know—I really am not sure that I could care for anybody now—but I told him to come back in a year and tell me again. I said it was not a promise, but it was, you know, and I am quite sure I should have kept it."

Dead silence again.

"Why have you told me? Nobody need have known," said Lucy, very roughly and suddenly.

"I thought I should like you to know. Please understand that you may tell your father and everybody you choose. I can do nothing else for him now."

Lucy set her lips tight, and stared harder than ever at the motionless figure in the chair. The firelight was strangely becoming to Poppy's soft young beauty—her shining hair, her dreamy eyes, the melancholy sweetness of her mouth. Lucy got up, walked across the room, and knelt down close to her; no coldness or bitterness in her eyes now. Geoffrey's own could hardly have expressed a deeper, more reverent admiration.

"Thank you with all my heart," she said. "He went away happy. Heaven bless you! I would have given all I was worth to know it. No, my dear, I shall not tell my father. No human being shall know it from me. Why should they? It will be better so."

Before Poppy could speak, Lucy bent her head and burst into a passion of tears, the first that had been shed, perhaps, for Geoffrey. Long before she was at all

comforted, the patience of West and Bobby was exhausted, and they were scampering in the cold, dark twilight up and down the road.

Mr. Thorne and Frank looked into the room and saw the strange group before the fire, and slunk silently away, being quite unaccustomed to women's tears, and almost terrified at the sight of Lucy's.

"So Miss Latimer came to see you, my girl? 'Twas kind of her," said William Thorne, late that night, to his daughter. "The poor lad would have been pleased. From the time he was a little chap nobody was like Miss Latimer. Do you remember, Lucy?"

"He was right, father. She is as good as she's beautiful."

William Thorne never knew any more.

"Let's hope," said he, "that one of these days she'll marry a man who's worthy of her."

"Do you think such a man exists? I don't," said Lucy.

Persons of Lucy Thorne's character are apt to be exaggerated in their enthusiasm, as well as in their dislikes, and in their opinions generally. There are, no doubt, men worthy of Porphyria, even as she is now—a nobler, better, wiser woman for the lessons she has learnt. But no one of these has yet found his way to the old Court among the beech-woods, where she lives her quiet yet active life among all those poorer neighbours who love her and look up to her; protected in her turn by the near and faithful affection of the Rector and Aunt Fanny.

Poppy's sitting-room is hung all round with Geoffrey Thorne's sketches, and none of the very few people who are admitted there venture to criticise her taste in art.

Yet perhaps it is as well—and not only for worldly-wise reasons that Mrs. Cantillon might give—that Geoffrey's love for her, strong as ever, for the first time happy and hopeful, should have been laid to sleep so soon, before the future with all its uncertainties could touch it. It is as well that the moment which drew those two together should also have parted them, saying to Geoffrey's deaf ears, even when her kiss seemed to crown the love of his life:

"This that seems like greeting is in truth farewell."

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a rather close afternoon in the third week of May. Fine weather had lasted without a break for more than a fortnight; for the last two or three days there had been little or no breeze; and the inevitable effect had been produced upon London. The streets were a combination of dust, which defied the water-carts; and glare, which seemed to radiate alike from the heavy, smoky-blue sky, the houses, and the pavements. It was only half-past three, and Piccadilly was as yet far from being crowded. The pavement was mainly occupied by the working population, which hurries to and fro along the London streets from morning to night regardless of fashionable hours; and the few representatives of the non-working class—smartly-dressed women and carefully got-up and sauntering men—stood out with peculiar distinctness. But the figure of Dennis Falconer, as he walked westward along the north side of Piccadilly, was conspicuous not only on these rather unenviable terms.

At the first glance it would have seemed that the past eighteen years had altered him considerably, and altered him always for the better; analysed carefully, the alteration resolved itself into a very noticeable increase of maturity and of a certain kind of strength; and the improvement into the fact that his weak points were of a kind to be far less perceptible as such on a very mature than on an immature face.

His face was thin and very brown; there were worn lines about it which told of physical endurance; and in the sharper chiselling of the whole the thinness of the nose and the narrowness of the forehead were no longer striking. The somewhat self-conscious superiority of his younger days had disappeared under the hand of time, and a certain sternness which had replaced it seemed to give dignity to his expression. The keen steadiness of his eyes had strengthened, and, indeed, it was their expression which helped in a very great degree to make his face so noticeable. He no longer wore a beard, and the firm, square outline of his chin and jaw were visible, while his mouth was hidden by a moustache—iron-grey like his hair. He was very well dressed, but there was that about the simple conventionality of his attire which suggested that its correctness was rather a concession to exterior demands than the expression of personal weakness.

More than one of the people who turned their heads to look at him as he walked down Piccadilly were familiar with that grave, stern face; it had been reproduced lately in the pages of all the illustrated papers, and people glanced at it with the interest created by the appearance in the flesh of something of a celebrity. Falconer had done a great deal of good work for the Geographical Society in the course of the past eighteen years; work characterised by no brilliancy or originality of intellectual resource, but eminently persevering, conscientious, and patient. During the last year, however, a chapter of accidents had conspired to invest the expedition of which he was the leader with a touch of romance and excitement with which his personality would never have endued it. The achievement in which the expedition had resulted

had been hailed in England as a national triumph, and Dennis Falconer found himself one of the lions of the moment.

But the position, especially for a man who believed himself to attach no value whatever to it, had been somewhat dearly bought. Falconer, as he walked the London streets on that May afternoon, was trying to realise himself as at home in them, settled among them, perhaps, for an indefinite period; and the effort brought an added shade of gravity to his face. The terrible physical strain of the last six months; a strain the severity of which he had hardly realised at the time, as he endured from day to day with the simple, unimaginative perseverance of a man for whom nerves have no existence; had told even upon his iron constitution, and a couple of great London doctors had condemned him to a year's inactivity at least, under penalties too grave to be provoked.

He turned down Sloane Street, and another quarter of an hour brought him to number twenty-two, Queen Anne Street. He rang, was admitted, and ushered upstairs into the drawing-room.

The room was empty, and Falconer walked across it, glancing about him with those keen, habitually observant eyes of his, and on his face there was something of the stiffness and reserve which had characterised his voice a minute earlier as he asked for Mrs. Romaine.

Until the night, now nearly a fortnight ago, when they had met in Lady Bracondale's drawing-room, Dennis Falconer had seen Mrs. Romaine only once since their journey from Nice had ended in old Mr. Falconer's house. That one occasion had been his visit to his uncle—so called—in his Swiss home in the second year of Mrs. Romaine's widowhood.

He had been in Europe several times since then and had always made a point of visiting old Mr. Falconer, but on every subsequent occasion it had happened—rather strangely, as he had thought to himself once or twice—that Mrs. Romaine was away from home. After old Mr. Falconer's death communication between them occurred only at the rarest intervals. Dennis Falconer was Mrs. Romaine's only remaining relation, and in this capacity had been left by her uncle one of her trustees; but any necessary business was transacted by his fellow trustee—old Mr. Falconer's lawyer. But the clan instinct was very strong in Falconer; it brought

in its wake a whole set of duties and obligations which for most men are non-existent; and the sense of duty which had been characteristic of him in early manhood had only been more deeply—and narrowly—engraved by every succeeding year.

Arrived in London, and knowing Mrs. Romaine to be settled there, he had considered it incumbent on him to call on her, and had written the note which she had received nearly a fortnight ago. He had written it with much the same expression on his face—only a little less pronounced, perhaps—as rested on it now that he was waiting for Mrs. Romaine in her own drawing-room. Through all the changes brought about by the passing of eighteen years, the mental attitude produced in him towards Mrs. Romaine during those weeks of dual solitude at Nice had remained almost untouched, except inasmuch as its disapproval had been accentuated by everything he had heard of her since. It had been vivified and rendered, as it were, tangible and definite by the short interview at Lady Bracondale's party, which had made her a reality instead of a remembrance to him.

He was standing before a large and very admirable photograph of Julian—Julian at his very best and most attractive—contemplating it with a heavy frown, when the door behind him opened under a light, quick touch, and Mrs. Romaine came into the room.

"It is too shocking to have kept you waiting!" she said. "So glad to see you! I gave myself too much shopping to do, and I have had a quite fearful rush!"

Her voice and manner were very easy, very conventionally cordial; and, as it seemed to Falconer, there was not a natural tone or movement about her. It was her "at home" afternoon, and she was charmingly dressed in something soft and pale-coloured; her eyes were very bright, and the play of expression on her face was even more vivacious and effective than usual—a little exaggeratedly so, even.

She shook hands and pointed him to a seat with a graceful little gesture, sinking into a chair herself with an affectation of hard-won victory over the "fearful rush"; the subtle assumption of the most superficial society relation as alone existing between them was as insidious and as indefinable as it had been on their previous meeting, and seemed to set the key-note of the situation even before she spoke again.

"It is a frightful season!" she said. "Really horribly busy! They say it is to be a short one—I am sure I trust it is true, if we are any of us to be left alive at the end—and everything seems to be crammed into a few weeks. Don't you think so? You are very lucky to have arrived half-way through."

"London just now does not seem to be a particularly desirable place, certainly," answered Falconer; his manner was very formal and reserved, a great contrast to her apparent ease.

"No!" she said, lifting her eyebrows with a smile. "Now, that sounds rather ungrateful in you, do you know, for London finds you a very desirable visitor. One hears of you everywhere."

"I am afraid I must confess that I take very little pleasure in going 'everywhere,'" returned Falconer stiffly. "Social life in London seems to me to have altered for the worse in every direction, since I last took part in it."

"And yet you go out a great deal!" with a little society laugh. "That sounds a trifle inconsistent!"

"I am not sufficiently egotistical to imagine that my individual refusal to countenance it would have any effect upon society," answered Falconer, still more stiffly. "To tolerate is by no means to approve."

Falconer's reasons for the toleration in question—the real reasons of which he himself was wholly unconscious—would have astonished him not a little, if he could have brought himself to realise them, in their narrow conventionality. Fortunately it did not occur to Mrs. Romaine to ask for them. With the ready tact of a woman of the world she turned the conversation with a gracefully worded question as to his recent expedition. He answered it with the courteous generality—only rather more gravely spoken—with which he had answered a great many similar questions put to him during the past week by ladies to whom he had been introduced in his capacity of momentary celebrity; and she passed on from one point to another with the superficial society interest evoked by one of the topics of the hour. Her exaggerated comments and questions, more or less wide of the mark, were exhausted at length, and a moment's pause followed; a fact that indicated, though Falconer did not know it, that the preceding conversation had involved some kind of strain on the bright

little woman who had kept it up so vivaciously. The pause was broken by Falconer.

"You have heard," he said, "of poor Thomson's illness?"

It would hardly be true to say that Mrs. Romaine started—even slightly—but a curious kind of flush seemed to pass across her face. As she answered, both her voice and her manner seemed instinctively to increase and emphasize that distance which she had tacitly set between them; it was as though the introduction into the conversation of a name their mutual familiarity with which represented mutual interests and connections had created the instinct in her.

"Yes, poor man!" she said carelessly. "There has been a good deal of illness about this season, somehow."

"I am afraid it is a bad business," went on Falconer, with no comprehension of the turn she had given to the conversation, and with his mental condemnation of what seemed to him simple heartlessness on her part not wholly absent from his voice. "There was to be a consultation to-day; and I shall call this evening to hear the result. But I am afraid there is very slender hope."

"How very sad!" said Mrs. Romaine with polite interest.

Falconer bent his head in grave assent, and then with a view to arousing in her shallow nature—as it seemed to him—some remembrance at least of the usefulness to her of the man whose probable death she contemplated so carelessly, he said with formal courtesy:

"Thomson has done all the work connected with our joint trusteeship so admirably hitherto that there has been no need for my services. But if, while he is ill, you should find yourself in want of his aid in that capacity, I need not say that I am entirely at your command."

Again that curious flush passed across Mrs. Romaine's face, leaving it rather pale this time.

"Thanks, so much!" she said quickly. "I really could not think of troubling you. I've no doubt I shall be able to hold on until Mr. Thomson is well again. Thanks immensely! You will not be within reach for very long, I suppose?"

"I shall be in London for a year, certainly," answered Falconer, acknowledging her tacit refusal to recognise any claim on him in the formal directness of his reply. Then, as she uttered a sharp little

exclamation of surprise, he added briefly: "I am in the doctors' hands, unfortunately. There is something wrong with me, they say."

"I am very sorry—" she began prettily, though her eyes were rather hard and preoccupied. But at that moment the door opened to admit an influx of visitors, and Falconer rose to go.

"So glad to have seen you!" she said as she turned to him after welcoming the new-comers. "You won't have a cup of tea? It is always rather crushing when a man refuses one's tea, isn't it, Mrs. Anson?" turning as she spoke to a lady sitting close by. Then as she gave him her hand, speaking in a tone which still included the other lady in the conversation, she alluded for the first time to Julian. The whole call had gone by without one of those affected little references to "my boy" with which all Mrs. Romayne's acquaintances were so familiar, that such an omission under the circumstances would have been hardly credible to any one of them.

"I'm so sorry you have missed my boy!" she said now with her artificially apologetic laugh. "I'm afraid I am absurdly proud of him—isn't that so, dear Mrs. Anson?—but he really is a dear fellow."

"He is going to the bar, I believe?" said Falconer; his face and voice alike were uncompromisingly stern and unbending.

"Yes!" answered Julian's mother. "He is not clever, dear boy, but I hope he may do fairly well. Good-bye! Shall you be at the Gordons' to-night? We are going first to see the American actress they rave about so. A funny little domestic party—I and my son and my son's new and particular 'chum.' Good-bye!"

Mrs. Romayne's face did not regain its normal colour as she turned her attention to her other callers, nor did those faint lines about her mouth and eyes disappear. She was particularly charming that afternoon, but always, as she welcomed one set of visitors or parted from another, laughing, talking or listening so gaily, there was a faint, hardly definable air of preoccupation about her. She had a great many visitors, and the afternoon grew hotter as it wore on. When she dressed for dinner that night, finding herself strangely nervous, irritable with her maid, and "on edge altogether," as she expressed it, she was very definite

and distinct in her self-assurances that such an unusual state of things was owing solely to the heat and "those tiresome people"; rather unnecessarily distinct and explicit it would have seemed, since there was apparently no chance of contradiction.

The acquaintanceship between Julian and Marston Loring had developed during the past fortnight with surprising rapidity. They had dined together at the club, they had smoked together in Loring's chambers, and they had met incessantly at dances, "at homes," or dinners, on all of which occasions Mrs. Romayne had been uniformly gracious to her son's friend.

At a garden-party a few miles out of London, admittedly the greatest failure of the season, when Loring and the Romaynes had walked about together all the afternoon with that carelessness of social obligations which a dull party is apt to engender, the scheme for the present evening had been arranged; Loring adding a preliminary dinner at a restaurant, with himself in the capacity of host to Mrs. Romayne and her son, to the original suggestion that they should go together to the theatre.

Julian was in high spirits as they drove off to keep their engagement, but his mother's responses to his chatter were neither so ready nor so bright as usual. He glanced at her once or twice and then said boyishly:

"You look awfully done up, mother!"

Mrs. Romayne turned to him quickly, her eyes sparkling angrily, her whole face looking irritable and annoyed.

"My dear Julian," she said sharply, "it's a very bad habit to be constantly commenting on people's appearance; especially when your remarks are uncomplimentary! You told me I looked tired the other day. Please don't do it again!"

Such an ebullition of temper was an almost unheard-of thing with Mrs. Romayne, and Julian could only stare at her in helpless astonishment—not hurt, but simply surprised, and inclined to be resentful. He could not realise as a woman might have done the jarred, quivering state of nerves implied in such an outbreak; and he simply thought his mother was rather odd, when a moment later she stretched out her hand hastily, and laid it on his with a quick, tight squeeze.

"That was abominably cross, dear!" she said in a voice which shook. "Don't mind! I am all right now."

But she was not all right, and though she made a valiant effort to collect her forces and appear so, her gaiety throughout dinner was strained and forced. Loring's quick perception realised instantly that something was wrong with her, and his demeanour under the circumstances was significant at once of the work of the past fortnight, and of his individual capacity for turning everything to his own ends. With a tacit assumption of a certain right to consider her, he evinced just such a delicate appreciation of her mood as gave her a sense of rest and soothing, without letting her feel for a moment that he found anything wanting in her. His pose was always that of a man to whom youth or even early manhood, with its follies and inexperience, is a thing of the dim past, and he used that pose now to the utmost advantage; combining a mental equality with the mother with an actual equality with the son as his contemporary in a manner which made him seem in a very subtle way equally the friend of each. He talked, of course, almost exclusively to Mrs. Romaine, never, however, failing to include Julian in the conversation; and he so managed the conversation as to take all its trouble on his own shoulders, and give Mrs. Romaine little to do but listen and be entertained.

He succeeded so well that the dinner-hour, by the time it was over, had done the work of many days in advancing his dawning intimacy with Mrs. Romaine.

She felt better, she told herself as they entered the theatre—told herself with rather excessive eagerness and satisfaction, perhaps because of something within, of which the quick, nervous movement of her hands as she unfastened her cloak was the outward and visible sign.

The curtain was just going up as they seated themselves, and during the first quarter of an hour the two seats to their left remained empty. Then Mrs. Romaine, whose attention was by no means chained to the stage, became aware of the slow and difficult approach of a flow of loudly-whispered and apologetic conversation, combined with the large person of a lady; and a moment or two later she was being fallen over by Mrs. Halse, who was followed by a girl, and who continued to explain the situation fluently and audibly, until a distinct expression of the opinion of the pit caused her to subside temporarily.

She began to talk again before the

applause on the fall of the curtain had died away, and her voice reached Mrs. Romaine, to whom her remarks were addressed, across the girl who was with her, and Julian, who was sitting on his mother's left hand, with gradually increasing distinctness.

"So curious that our seats should be together!" were the first words Mrs. Romaine heard. "I have just been meeting a connection of yours. So fascinating! Oh, by-the-bye—my cousin. I don't think she has had the pleasure of being introduced to you, though she has met your son. Miss Hilda Newton—Mrs. Romaine."

Miss Hilda Newton was a very pretty, dark girl of a somewhat pronounced type. She had large, perceptive black eyes, singularly unabashed, a charming little turned-up nose, and a rather large mouth with a good deal of shrewd character about it. She was understood to be a country cousin of Mrs. Halse's, with whom she had been staying for the last three weeks; but only a very critical and rather unkind eye could have traced the country cousin in her dress, which had a great deal of style and dash about it. She acknowledged Mrs. Halse's introduction of her with rather excessive self-possession, and after a casual word or two to Mrs. Romaine, addressed herself to Julian; it was she with whom he had disappeared to supper at Lady Bracondale's "at home," and they had evidently seen a good deal of one another in the interval.

Mrs. Romaine had noticed them together more than once, and she had taken a dislike to Miss Newton's pretty independent face and manners. In her present mood it was an absolute relief to her to find in the girl a legitimate excuse for irritation, and a reason for the fact that Mrs. Halse's speech had somehow undone all the work of the early part of the evening, and set her nerves jarring and quivering afresh.

"Detestably bad style!" she said to herself angrily, giving an unheeding ear to Mrs. Halse as she watched Miss Newton reply with a little twirl of her fan to an eager question of Julian's. "Just what one would expect in a cousin of that woman." Then she became aware that "that woman" was vociferously insisting on changing places with Julian, and that Julian was acceding to the proposition with considerable alacrity; and before she had well realised exactly what the change involved, Mrs. Halse, with much paraphernalia of smelling-bottle, fan, opera-glasses, and programme, was established at her

side, and Julian and Miss Newton were seated together at the end of the row, practically isolated by the stream of Mrs. Halse's conversation.

"So horrid to talk across people, isn't it?" said that lady airily, though no crowd ever collected would have interfered with her flow of language. "This is much more comfortable. My dear Mrs. Romaine, I am simply dying to rave to somebody about your cousin—he is your cousin, isn't he?—Mr. Falconer, you know. What a splendid man! Of course all the accounts of his work have been most fascinating, but the man himself makes it all seem so much more real, don't you know. Now, do tell me, is he your first cousin, and do you remember him when he was quite a little boy, and all that sort of thing?"

Mrs. Romaine took up her fan and unfurled it. She was looking past Mrs. Halse at Julian and Miss Newton, who were looking over the same programme with their heads rather close together. Her eyebrows were slightly contracted, and her eyes very bright, and the restless movements of the slender hand that held the fan seemed to be an expression of intense inward irritation.

"Oh dear, no; Dennis Falconer is not my first cousin, by any means!" she said carelessly, though her voice was a trifle sharp. "Third or fourth, or something of that kind."

"He is quite a hero, isn't he?" said Mrs. Halse, gushingly addressing Loring. "Have you met him?"

Loring, though his glance had every appearance of perfect carelessness, was watching Mrs. Romaine intently. He had noticed her access of nervous irritability, and he was curious as to the cause. Was it her son's flirtation with Miss Newton? Was it dislike to Mrs. Halse? Or had it any connection with Dennis Falconer? He had his reasons for a study of Mrs. Romaine's idiosyncrasies.

"Yes," he said. "I met him the other night. A good sort of fellow he seemed."

"He's magnificent!" said Mrs. Halse enthusiastically. "We must have him at the bazaar, my dear Mrs. Romaine; that I am quite determined. If he would sell African trophies for us, you know—a native's tooth, or poppy-heads—oh, arrow-heads, is it?—well, anything of that sort—it would be a fortune to us! Have you seen a great deal of him? Cousins are so often just like brothers and sisters, are they not?"

A low laugh and a toss of her head from Miss Newton at this moment closed the perusal of the programme, and Julian turned his attention to perusing the pretty black eyes instead. Mrs. Romaine's lips seemed to tighten and whiten, and the fingers which held the fan were tightly clenched as she answered in a voice which rang hard in spite of her efforts:

"Sometimes they are, of course. But it depends so much on circumstances. Dennis Falconer and I had not met for years until the other day."

At that moment the curtain went up, leaving Mrs. Halse literally with her mouth open, and the instant it fell Mrs. Romaine leant across to Miss Newton with a comment on the performance, spoken in a rather thin, tense voice, and with eyes that glittered as though the nervous strain under which the speaker was labouring was becoming almost insupportable. Apparently something in her face repelled the girl, for her answer was of the briefest, and Julian throwing himself into the breach, he and Miss Newton were instantly absorbed in an animated discussion. It was a long wait, and Loring, noting every one of the restless movements of the woman by his side as she talked and laughed so sharply, understood that to Mrs. Romaine every moment meant nervous torture. The instant the green curtain fell on the third act she rose, and Loring followed her example, and wrapped her quickly and deftly in her cloak.

"I can't say I think much of your American prodigy," she said to him with a forced laugh. "I must confess that she has bored me to such an extent that I really can't stand any more boredom, and shall go straight home. Julian!"

She glanced round for him as she spoke, but he was escorting Mrs. Halse and her cousin, and she was waiting for him in her brougham before he joined her.

"Suppose you come to the club with me!" suggested Loring carelessly, as Julian received his mother's announcement of her intentions rather blankly. "What do you say to a game of billiards?"

"All right," responded Julian. "Thanks, old fellow. It was only that I told Miss Newton we were coming on. Isn't she a jolly girl, mother?"

Mrs. Romaine smiled; it was surely the lamplight that made her smile look almost ghastly.

"Very pretty indeed," she said lightly.

"It's a sad pity you're such an ineligible fellow, isn't it?"

And Loring, as the carriage drove off, said to himself admiringly: "What a wonderfully clever woman!"

Reaction from a heavy strain—even, apparently, if it is only the strain of combating exhaustion engendered by heat—is a terrible thing. When Mrs. Romaine got out of her carriage after her long drive, her face was haggard and drawn. She passed into the house, gathered up mechanically, and without a glance, two letters waiting for her on the hall-table; told the maid who was waiting for her that she might go to bed, and went up into the drawing-room.

There was a low chair by a little table covered with dainty, useless paraphernalia, which she particularly affected. She sat down in it now, almost unconsciously as it seemed, without even loosening her cloak, and with a long, low sigh; the moments passed, and still she sat there, a curious grey pallor about her face, her eyes gazing straight before her as though they were looking into the future or the past. At last, as if by a sudden fierce effort of will, she roused herself and began to tear open the letters still in her hand as if with a desperate instinct towards occupying her thoughts.

"I won't!" she muttered between clenched teeth and thin, white lips. "I won't! It is all nonsense! All nonsense!"

Her eyes fell on the letter by this time open in her hand, and she read it almost unconsciously, taking in the sense gradually as she read:

"DEAR COUSIN HERMIA,—I have just heard to my great sorrow of the death of our old friend Thomson, and I think it right to let you know of it. I believe I need not remind you that on any future occasion on which the help of your now, unfortunately, sole trustee may be necessary, you will find me entirely at your service. Faithfully yours,

"DENNIS FALCONER."

With a sudden fierce gesture, of which her small white fingers looked hardly capable, Mrs. Romaine crushed the letter in her hand and lifted her head.

"To be thrown upon him!" she said in a curious, breathless tone. "To have to come into contact—close contact, personal contact—with him!"

WHAT IS IT TO CELEBRATE?

When we, in England, look back upon the first Exposition of all the Expositions, the "Great Exhibition" of '51, we smile. The smile is rather acid, a little out of drawing, perhaps, but still, for decency's sake, let us call the thing a smile. What a new era that Exposition was to usher in! How the New World was to be unlike the Old! If ever dreams were dreamed, folks dreamed them then. If ever big words were spoken, men spoke them then. Well, forty years have gone. There have been many Expositions since that first Exhibition in Hyde Park. Now America is going to have its Exposition—the greatest Exposition that was ever seen—the world's show. And, one asks, what is it to celebrate?

Why, you say, it is to celebrate the fact that four hundred years have passed since the discovery of America. And is that all? Quite enough too, say you. If you reflect for a moment, you will perceive that that is not so. A place may have been discovered four hundred years ago, and yet the fact of its discovery may not be worthy of celebration now. Ah, you cry, but look at the advance America has made. Advance, in what? In all things! When one receives this answer one wonders if it can be correctly said of any nation that it has advanced in all things, either in four hundred, or in four thousand years, or in four! You hurl at the enquirer's head an encyclopedia of statistics. The population of America was then this. Now it is that. The acres under cultivation were so many. Now they are so many. The wealth, per head, was so much. Now it is so much. Still one asks, is that all the world's show is to celebrate?

When we, in England, had our Exhibition of '51 it was more than suggested that it was intended to inaugurate the reign of "peace, perfect peace." It would have been hard to talk greater nonsense. One has only to glance at the battlefields of the past forty years to see what sort of reign that reign of "peace, perfect peace," has been. If we could only summon up before us all the ghosts of those who, since 1851, have died in battle in all the countries of the world, what a phalanx it would be of white men, of black men, of yellow, and brown, and red, of bondmen, and of free!

The Exhibition of 1851 was a gigantic

shop, a novel form of advertisement. Whatever the promoters may have intended, each individual exhibitor meant to spread abroad, even unto the ends of the earth, the knowledge that, for price and quality, his boots and shoes, or whatever it might have been, were unrivalled in the trade. The general idea in England undoubtedly was that English products would be shown to be so uncontestedly superior to all others that all the world would come and buy them. We meant, in the first place, to get in one way the money of the visitors who came to see the Exhibition. We meant, in the second place, to get in another way, afterwards, the money the visitors had left at home. That was the general idea before the Exhibition was opened. After it was closed the general idea took a somewhat different form. That later form was this. What fools we Englishmen have been! We have given ourselves away! We have taught our rivals how to beat us! Where they were weak we have shown them how to increase their strength by taking ours! That was what men began to say soon after the Exhibition was closed. That is what some of them still say unto this hour.

Is the Centennial to be nothing but a gigantic shop? Is the end and aim of the whole affair to be to advertise such facts as that the hog-killing and pork-packing machinery of Chicago is, in all respects, unrivalled in the trade? One can but hope. Yet, as one faces the position, one need not be a pessimist to feel a little sick at heart. One is quite aware that the fine art section is to be the finest that ever was. Acres—or is it to be miles!—of pictures. It is all in superlatives, from the hogs to the fine arts. But what does it mean? What is it to celebrate? The question keeps hammering at our hearts, ringing in our ears. Is it to celebrate the fact that the brotherhood, the unity of the nations, is more of a reality and less of a dream than it was, say, forty years ago, at the time of the first of the Expositions in '51?

It is easy for Americans to throw their hats into the air, and to cry, "What fine fellows we are! See the great things we have done!" It is natural for men who have done great things, perhaps, to throw their hats into the air. But, unless one is reminded, one is apt to forget that what has happened to America happened, at some time or other, to every nation that ever was. Each of the nations of antiquity—in its own estimation, at any rate—

waxed great. What a little thing was Greece! And then how great! And then? Consider England. Yesterday a Roman province. And to-day? And, now, what next? Or, consider what Russia was before Peter the Great, and what it is under the third Alexander. The history of every nation, up to that point to which the history of America has reached, is the same. It is a history of progress, of growth, of the child attaining to maturity. The difference is only a difference of degree—a question of opportunity.

It is always a delicate thing for a foreigner to attempt, when addressing another nation, to play the part of a "candid friend." We all know what Canning said about the "candid friend," and we are apt to think, not seldom with good cause, that one's foreign friends are the most candid friends alive. But, so far as I am myself concerned, I decline, when speaking to Americans, to call myself a foreigner. Americans are flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone. I am one of a great family. America, to me, is England written large. Very large, if you will, but England still. Then, in the second place, I am very far from desiring to play the part of the one-sided candid friend—to extol the elder branch of the family while depreciating the younger. No one has less reason to suppose that the "unnatural old parent" is a faultless being. It is because England has so many faults that we Englishmen have been looking, with longing eyes, to you across the sea. It is because, in so many respects, England has erred and strayed, that we have hoped that you, her wondrous child, would choose the better way.

It seems to us that the opportunity is yours, that the tide is yours which, taken at the flood, leads on to more than fortune—to wisdom, and to honour too. England herself has had much to contend with. She is, indeed, but a little thing; a spot upon the surface of the globe. And she has had to fight her way, "line upon line, here a little, and there a little"—and against what odds?—not only to greatness, but to freedom. She has fought, at one and the same time, for empire and for liberty. But you, in America, have come into a fair heritage—surely a fairer was never seen!—which was ready-made for you. You have not had to do much fighting for it. It was yours almost without the fighting. And you have been able to do as you pleased with what you had.

There has been no one to say you nay—except yourselves. No dreamer of olden time could have dreamed of a more promising field for the founding of Utopia.

It is because your opportunities have been so great that some of us in England—dreamers, perhaps—have hoped that you would make great use of them, that you would begin where we left off, and lead on. I suppose that there will be not a few in America who will exclaim that you have led on. In a certain sense, no doubt, this is so. In the race for wealth, for instance, you have led on. There the lead you have gained is prodigious. What, in England, is a desire for wealth, seems with you to have become a raging fever. The whole nation seems to have given itself up, body and soul, to an unceasing, unrelenting pursuit of the "almighty dollar." The accretion of wealth seems with you to be the only thing worth living for. A man who lives for anything else seems with you to be regarded as an object of contempt. I have seen it stated in many of your publications, and I have heard it said by numerous Americans, that you have no "leisured class." It seems incredible, but I have heard it said as if the fact of there being no "leisured class" were a fortunate thing for America and for the Americans. There surely must be some mistake. A man has only one life to live. If he has no leisure here, it is devoutly to be hoped, for his own sake, that he will be eternally at rest hereafter. England is full of the "leisured class," else I should not care to live in it. It seems to me that if his life is to be at all worth living, every man ought to be a man of leisure. Not a lazy man, be it understood; but a man of reasonable leisure.

You have certainly, as has been allowed, led on in the race for wealth, and there is every prospect, so far as one is able to judge, that you will continue to lead. In what else have you led on? There must be something else. Yet one has to pause for a moment to consider what it is. One of your citizens said to me some little time ago—as, indeed, other of your citizens have said to me before—that in America you have stamped out poverty: that, with you, no man need be poor unless he likes. If that is so, then you have indeed led on. You have done one of the things, perhaps the greatest of the things, which we had hoped you would do—the thing which some of the dreamers had dreamed that you ought to do.

Unfortunately, the fact is not so demonstrable a fact as one would like it to be. I have lying before me a letter from an American gentleman—as the slang has it, a man of culture—whose name is not unknown to some of you, who declares that he finds it very hard to earn his daily bread. He goes on to state that, in America, the struggle for existence is "horrible." I saw the other day, in one of your magazines, an allusion to the tenement houses of New York, in which "the poor" live. A recent article in *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* dealt with the same subject.* It was painful to read about those houses. They seemed to be at least as bad as some of our "rookeries." If you have no poverty, how come you to have poor?

I imagine that that citizen of America, and that those other citizens of America, who told me that you had stamped out poverty, spoke slightly at large. There can be no doubt that the poor are not with you so much as they are with us. It would be strange if it were otherwise. In Europe, you see, we have had more time in which to "build up" a pauper class. You are but beginning. America is large. There still is room to spare. But as population increases, as the centuries roll on, is there any reason why pauperism should not become as pressing a question with you as it is with us? I am not aware that, as a nation, you are doing anything by way of that prevention which, the proverb tells us, is better than cure. So forcibly has this impressed itself on some among you, that some of your private citizens have endeavoured to do what, as a nation, it would seem that you have even declined to attempt. Mr. Bellamy has made suggestions. I believe that your Government has "wiped out" the men who endeavoured to act on those suggestions. I have read something about Brook Farm, and the Shakers; but about any national attempt to give some share of the good things of the nation to all the people of the nation, I have read nothing of that. In a play of Mr. Bronson Howard's, a son pauperises his father in the race for wealth. Of course, that is only in a play. But is it not a fact that you are cutting each other's throats by means of "corners," and "wars of rates," and similar ingenious contrivances? If that is so, you are only treading the path which we, in Europe, have trod these hundred

* See *ALL THE YEAR ROUND*, Vol. IX., Third Series, No. 212, page 57.

years and more. I fear it is a path in which we have led, and in which you but follow.

Are we to be driven to the conclusion that while the scene continually shifts, the actors always are the same? Is that one of the things which the Centennial is to celebrate? That the human nature of 1892 is no better than the human nature of 1492? That if Columbus were to come back again to-morrow, he would still have to struggle, and to suffer, to fight to the death for the right to enjoy the honours which he had doubly and trebly earned? It is, perhaps, foolish to make a bother. It is so long since the world was told that there was nothing new under the sun. And yet there are dreamers still! For the life of me I cannot understand why the Exhibition at Chicago should not celebrate something that was worth the celebrating. Why, for instance, it should not celebrate the fact that, at least on one portion of the earth's surface, men had begun to love each other, had begun to realise that all men—the men of all nations of the world—had an equal right, not only to live, but to enjoy life's good things.

You, in America, who might have chosen the greater part, appear—may it only be appearances!—to have deliberately chosen the lesser. You have chosen the part which we, in Europe, to our shame, have chosen through the centuries. We have been carefully inculcating the doctrine of what has been called, I presume in irony, "racial hatred." It would almost seem as if you, by way of celebrating your fourth century of existence, were beginning to inculcate that doctrine too. You deny it! Perhaps rightly. But, in that case, appearances, as we see them in Europe, are singularly misleading.

Before proceeding, let us first of all arrive, on one point, at a common understanding. What is meant by the brotherhood of man, by the relationship of one man to another man, by the idea of a family consisting of all the nations of the world? Your politicians say that what is meant is—nonsense. The idea is a visionary idea, which could only find a place in the brains of visionaries and of fools. Precisely. I, for my part, shall not attempt to supply an answer to my own question, but I would point out this. The answer which your politicians give is the answer which has been given by all politicians of all nations in all the history of the world—in all the

ry of the world, that is, so far as we

have it. That, to my mind, in itself is ominous, and for this reason. The greater part of the nations that have been are—where? Well, at any rate, we have the history of some of them. A somewhat monotonous history it is. It is invariably the history of a rise. Equally invariably, it is the history of a fall. One feature in the matter ought to be completely satisfactory. All these nations seem to have been on the right side in politics—that is, if we can trust our politicians of to-day. You will find this is so, look where you choose. What could have seemed more preposterous to a leader in Israel than the suggestion that the Gentiles, say, were brothers, and that it would be just as well to treat them as members of the same family? How a Babylonian politician would have scoffed at the notion of admitting the Israelites to the privileges enjoyed by the men of Babylon! Or come further down. What was the proudest boast of a Roman politician? Was it not that all the peoples of the world were made to yield tribute, in some shape or other, to the people of Rome?

The fundamental notion which was at the root of the political systems of all the vanished peoples was precisely the same system which certain of your politicians are endeavouring to institute in America to-day. The modern idiom, I conceive, sarcastically, calls the thing Protection. The idea is that one's own nation requires protection from other nations, not in time of war, but in time of peace. Certain of your politicians are advising you to keep yourselves to yourselves, to have as little to do with other peoples as you possibly can, and when you must have dealings with them to levy tribute every time you deal. So it would seem that in America—that wonderful land, great in the strength of its young manhood, which, I verily believe, might, if it chose, change the whole aspect of the world—is to be told again that dirty, grimy, old-time story, which has been told over and over again since earliest antiquity. Instead of leading, as, it would seem, it so easily might do, it appears that America has deliberately preferred to follow along the little paths, in the little steps, of the little peoples, whose very names have crumbled into dust.

Is that one of the things which the Centennial is to celebrate? In that case it will resemble nothing so much as a Roman triumph. Certain of the Romans imagined

that these rejoicings were proofs of national progress. As a matter of fact, each triumph was another nail driven into the national coffin. Time may be a slow undertaker. But provide him with the materials, and he will finish his coffins at last. When he buries he buries well. The nations he has buried may be "resurrected" when the last trump sounds. Until then, never.

It would seem as if no great forward movement is likely to be initiated in Europe—none that is likely to be effective. It may not be a question of to-morrow, or even of the day after, but it would seem, at any rate, as if the writing were coming on the wall. The nations of Europe have, from the first, been self-seekers. Each in turn has swallowed up the other. It would seem but too likely that they will continue to swallow up each other to the end. England is making efforts, of a kind, in the direction of what is called Imperial Federation. But Imperial Federation seems to be a thing which it is difficult to obtain. Jealousy—that omnipresent, purblind, green-eyed monster—as usual, stops the way. But, at the same time, there is growing up in England, a strong feeling that the last word has not yet been spoken upon policies and upon governments; that the old "statecraft" which set, and which still sets, nation against nation, was rotten and wrong. Power is passing more and more into the hands of the great mass of the people, and the great mass of the people are beginning to realise that the teachers who taught them that it would be the part of wisdom to fence themselves about with fences, so that they might be a peculiar people and apart, were inspired, in that which they taught, by selfish motives; and that instead of being able to say, "I am a citizen of England," it would be better, perhaps, to be able to say, "I am a citizen of the World. My country, our country, all men's country, is the World." It is certain that some such feeling is beginning to make itself known in all the nations of Europe. In France, in Germany, in Italy, even in Russia, you will find it, if you look for it, wherever you may go. Rather late in the day, you say? Yes. But, for all our sakes, more especially for the sake of our children and our children's children, we will hope that this may be a case of better late than never.

It is obvious that the fact of our common brotherhood is scarcely to be established

by an appeal to arms. Rulers have always been ready enough to increase the number of their citizens by the summary process of going to war. The result, so far, has not been wholly satisfactory. Nor is it likely to be satisfactory until one nation sees its way to conquer all the other nations, and, having conquered them, to place the conquered nations on an equality with itself. More than one nation has tried to realise that ideal. But, as the ideal is still nothing but an ideal, it would be, perhaps, as well if the peoples of the world, setting their rulers on one side, were to take the matter into their own hands, and were to try, to take a phrase from the cookery books, "another way."

The old are bound. The new are free. So I have frequently been informed by Americans, so I have frequently read in all sorts and kinds of American publications. Is it theory, or is it fact? Or is it merely a phrase, and nothing more? Is the Old World bound? And is the New World free? There seems to be a not uncommon impression in the Old World that if the New World is free, it is fast being led into bondage—that America is being led by the nose to the grindstone. It would seem as if there had already been some grinding; and, what is worse, it would seem that there is likely to be much more. It would appear as if America were in bondage to the politicians. Politicians have been our ten plagues. It seems likely that they may be your twenty. Ours have lashed us with whips. Give yours time, and it would seem that they bid fair to lash you with scorpions.

The truth is that we have no doubt that if the Centennial were being run by the people of America, it would celebrate something worth the celebrating. We doubt if it is. We, being stupid, ignorant Europeans, do not understand by whom it is being run. We only wonder. We are told, you see, so many things. What are we to believe? We are told, for instance, that it is a Chicago Exposition; a local, not a national affair; that it will be run by Chicago for Chicago; that only certain interests will be represented; that America, as a nation, will stop away. I was present, lately, in a company of persons, where I heard one of your citizens, who, only a few days before, had left your shores, publicly state that the whole affair was "bunkum." Your citizen went on to declare that, at best, it would be a monster Barnum's show; that its chief purpose would be to

advertise Chicago; that the inhabitants of Chicago lived and died for the "almighty dollar;" that they would take uncommonly good care that those who came for wool, whether foreigners or fellow-countrymen, should go away shorn; that they had not the faintest intention of giving anything, even instruction; and that all they meant was to take. This gentleman went on like that, in my hearing, for a quarter of an hour. For all that I know, he went on like that, in other people's hearing, for the rest of the night. Oddly enough, the following day I was at an Exhibition at the Crystal Palace. Behind me, at one period of my visit, were seated some American tourists. They spoke so loudly that I could not help hearing what they said. They said some most unpleasant things about the Alpha and Omega of the Centennial Exposition. And I have seen some disagreeable observations in your own publications. What was, what is, one to think? We are on this side; we are not upon the scene. We have not, some of us, favourable opportunities of even distant observation. One would like to know what the Centennial is to celebrate!

One trusts that one may be forgiven for saying that if it is only going to be another big bazaar, no matter on how big a scale, one scarcely understands what reason there is for making any world-wide stir about the matter. If visitors are to continue to be insulted in your ports and fleeced because they dare to bring with them a few tributes of affection for American friends, one may be excused for doubting if the thing will be worth while coming to see. Here is a suggestion. Would it not be worth the while of the greatest nation the world has ever seen, during the period the Centennial is to be open, to extend to visitors a free and a hearty welcome in all your ports; to cease, for a while, to even attempt to tax them for venturing to set foot upon your shores, in proof of friendship; to receive them as brothers, not as brigands? Would the thing be an entire impossibility? Would the ruin worked on you be so great? Then in what a parlous state you, after all, must be. Is that what the Centennial is to celebrate? If the thing were done, on that account, if on no other, the year of the Centennial would be marked with a white stone in history. What a rush there would be of visitors when the news that a hospitable welcome would be extended to all bonâ fide travellers became noised

abroad! But perhaps, as your fellow-citizen suggested, the promoters of the Exposition only desire visitors whom they can fleece.

That is the only kind of visitors we in Europe have desired at our Expositions. That is the reason why, on this side, the very name of Exposition has begun to stink in men's nostrils. In theory it was to mean so fine a thing. In practice it has meant so mean a thing.

When one of these dreamers to whom I have referred sits down, and thinks of his dreams, and then of the reality, is it strange that he should scarcely know whether to laugh or cry? I call them dreamers. I suppose because men call those dreamers who fix their eyes upon things which might be, but which are not yet. That they might be seems to me to be quite clear. It seems to me that they always might have been; but that now they might be more than ever. You have told us, you, people of America, you, our brothers in America—I can give you the chapter and the verse!—that they should be; that you would give us them. It is the head-line of the charter of your constitution that all men are born equal. Not the men of one nation, but all men, the men of all the nations of the world. Those words are the reason of your existence, your justification of faith, the corner stone of your foundation. Do none of you ever ask yourselves if the building has not been growing a little out of the perpendicular since that first stone was laid? You see, we in Europe started anyhow. One can scarcely say how we started. Perhaps it would not be incorrect to say that we started in a muddle, and that we have continued in a muddle, as regards first principles, ever since. But there was no muddle about your start. There was never any doubt about your first principles. You had your principles, from the first, all cut and dried. And to us it seems that your principles were the true principles then, that they are the true principles now. One wonders what, as a nation, you think of them in your heart of hearts; what you think of the principles set forth in your own Declaration of Independence. What a Centennial your Centennial might have been, if its purpose had been to celebrate, in the presence of the world, the fact that you had proved, in theory and in practice, in the spirit and in the letter, the truth of your own principles! One may well doubt, however, if that is one of the things which the Centennial is to celebrate.

As you are aware, there are many Americans who visit Europe. We are glad that it is so. All over Europe no man receives a more hearty welcome than an American. Especially is this the case in England. There are clouds of witnesses to testify. From Americans of both sexes, of all ages, of all stations, who know both sides well, one hears something like this: "After all, the Old World is pretty nearly as good a place to live in as the New." One hardly knows what to make of such an admission. Of course, it is not unpleasant, from the Old World point of view; but for you? You may have to reflect for a few moments before you will be able to perceive even a tithe of all that such an admission conveys. One would merely observe, as an aid to reflection, that the Old World is very much the same Old World that it has always been, and that the New World—was to be so new. Probably your forefathers would have indignantly denied that, when a century had passed, their descendants would only be attempting to adapt their steps to the old, old paths, too often the dishonoured paths, which we have trod. They would scarcely have credited that one of the things which the Centennial was to celebrate would merely be the distinction which exists between tweedledum and tweedledee.

MARTIAL MUSIC.

It may safely be asserted that a regiment deprived of its band would lose much of that attractiveness in the public estimation which music confers in a degree hardly less than the scarlet coat itself. Outside military circles, however, very little is known about the bands of the British army or of their history. Still less can be gathered concerning the airs which have become associated with different regiments by tradition. Yet we know the feeling inspired by the stirring strains of the old Elizabethan song, "The British Grenadiers," or by the bagpipes when they bring back to the ears of the Highlander "the stirring memory of a thousand years." The glad tidings of the coming relief of Lucknow is said to have been first made known to her fellow-prisoners by a Highland girl who had heard the familiar sound of "The Campbells are Coming" in the far distance. Other associations are connected with the old Irish melody, "The Girl I Left Behind

Me," which is played when a regiment is quitting its quarters or going to a new station.

From the earliest times the sound of music has inspired the warrior in the fight, the war song of the bands gradually giving place to the "sonorous metal blowing martial sounds." The horn and its varieties did duty at the battle of Hastings, while the trumpet, the fruitful parent of so many other wind instruments, has been well known from the earliest period of human history. An example of the straight trumpet occurs on the monumental brass of Sir Roger de Trumpington, dating from about the year 1290, erected in the parish church of the Cambridgeshire village of that name. Cornage tenure was once a familiar way of holding land, particularly on the Scottish borders, the condition being that the tenant should blow a horn in case of danger from invasion. The Barony of Burgh-on-the-Sands in Cumberland was anciently so held. Froissart tells us that the Scots, with a view to frighten the soldiers of Edward the Third, "made marvellous great fires, and about midnight such a blasting and noise with their horns that it seemed as if all the great devils from hell had been come there"; and again the same chronicler, in 1338, records how the bass, the treble, and the tenor commingled their horrors to intimidate the Bishop of Durham and his army. It was by means of the shrill trump that orders to the army were usually conveyed.

More important still in its effect on hosts of men, is the sound of the spirit-stirring drum. Probably an eastern idea introduced by the Crusaders into Europe, it is frequently mentioned in the accounts of the first Crusade. When Edward the Third and his Queen made their triumphal entry into Calais in 1347, "tambours," or drums, were among the instruments which were played in their honour. Another of these was called a "nacaire," or kettle-drum, taken together with its name from the Arabs. The poet Chaucer also mentions this instrument in his description of the tournament in the "Knight's Tale":

Pipes, trompes, nakeres, and clarionnes,
That in the bataille blownen bloody sounes.

The King generally kept a troupe of these bandmen or minstrels in his employ, and we read that Edward the Second on one occasion gave a sum of sixty shillings to Roger the Trumpeter, Janino the Nakerer, and others, for their performances. Another minstrel was called the "Cheve-

retter," or player on the bagpipe. King Henry the Fifth had a band which discoursed sweet music during his expedition to Harfleur, each member being recompensed for his services with the sum of twelve pence per diem. When the citizens of London were mustered in the thirty-first year of the reign of Henry the Eighth, we hear that "before every standard was appointed one dromalade at the least." Each company of one hundred men at this time possessed a couple of drummers. Kettle-drums as used by cavalry appear to have been a comparative novelty in 1685, when Sir James Turner wrote. "There is another martial instrument," he tells us, "used with cavalry, which they call the kettle-drum; there be two of them which hang before the drummer's saddle, on both of which he beats."

The dignitary known as drum-major was not generally recognised in the English army till the close of the reign of Charles the First. Corporal punishment up to the time of William the Third was executed by the provost-marshal and his deputies, but afterwards the drummer was entrusted with the task. Among the records of the Coldstream Guards is an order that "the drum-major be answerable that no cat has more than nine tails." In 1661 a drum-major of the Parliamentary Army received one shilling and sixpence pay per diem.

It is said by some that we owe the fife, "ear-piercing," as Shakespeare calls it, to the Swiss, and Sir James Turner, who busied himself in writing on military matters, names it the "Allemaine whistle." In France it was employed at least as early as 1534, in which year it was ordered by Francis the First that each band of one thousand men was to have four drums and two fifes. In our own country, in 1540, we find "drommes and fyffes" included in the muster of London citizens. Shakespeare refers to the musician, not the instrument, when he speaks in the "Merchant of Venice" of "the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife." An old writer observes, indeed, that "a fyfe is a wry-neckt musician, for he always looks away from his instrument." The chronicler Stowe informs us that the Selected Companies of the City of London in 1585 were to be provided with "armour, ensignes, drums, fifes, and other furniture for the warres." Markham, the author of "The Souldier's Accidence," writing in the reign of the first Charles, lays down that

"the phipher (if there be more than one), the eldest shall march with the eldest drume." The spelling of the word "fife," as will be observed, seems to have been a great stumbling-block to the writers of old, and was written with a "p" or an "f" according to individual preferences. The same author in another work entitled "Five Decades of War," quaintly remarks that "the Phiph is onely an instrument of pleasure. . . . It is to the voice of the drum the soldier should wholly attend, and not to the air of the whistle, for the one (which is the drumme) speaks plainly and distinctly, the other speaks loud and shrill, but curiously and confusedly." How the fife speaks "curiously" Markham does not vouchsafe to explain, but concludes, "yet it is most necessary that the Drume and Phiph bee men of venerable and praise-worthie qualities, and of comely and well-shaped proportions, and indeed with all those especial vertues which should adorne a perfect soldier"; though it might be thought that a taste and ear for music would be worth a good many "venerable qualities" in a bandsman.

About the reign of James the Second the fife lost its popularity for a time, Sir James Turner observing, "with us any Captain may keep a piper in his company and maintain him, too, for no pay is allowed him—perhaps just as much as he deserveth." Fifes were restored to the army about 1745 by the Duke of Cumberland, the regiment which was the first to use them on their reintroduction being the Royal Artillery. The then Colonel, it appears, had brought a certain Hanoverian fifer named John Ulrich over from Hanover, when the allied army separated, who was the means of instructing the young idea in the art of playing that instrument.

About the year 1768 the beats and calls of the drum, then used in the service, were put into a permanent shape. The tattoo, or beat of the drum, calling soldiers to their quarters at night, was once called "tap-too," from the Dutch word signifying "no more drink to be tapped or sold." Fifers do not appear in the pay-list of the Coldstream Guards till 1797, when two of these musicians are charged in the company of Grenadiers. After the Restoration the hautboy, or oboe, appears among the other instruments of the band. A warrant of the time of Charles the Second was issued in 1678 for payment of the State clothing of the hautboys and four drummers. In the early years of the following century,

hautboys were introduced into the different regiments of Foot Guards. The pay of the soldiers who served at St. Quintin's in the reign of Mary was not so unlike that of the present day. The private soldier received eightpence; a drummer or fifer one shilling; and a trumpeter one-and-sixpence a day. Probably the first regimental band, as we now understand it, was that established in 1787 by the Artillery, the bandmaster of which received four shillings a day, and the eight privates employed as musicians were borne on the strength of the companies at Woolwich. As to the composition of a Militia band a few years later on, we have full information contained in a letter written by an inn-keeper of Lavenham, in Suffolk, who says: "We have had four companies of the West Middlesex Militia quartered upon us for three days, consisting of three officers and forty-nine men, who had the best band I ever heard. 'Tis worth mentioning to those who are lovers of superior music. It consisted of five clarionets, two French horns, one bugle horn, one trumpet, two bassoons, one bass drum, two triangles—the latter played by boys about nine years old—two tambourines—the performers mulattos—and the claspans by a real blackamoor, a very active man, who walked between the two mulattos, which had a very grand appearance indeed."

In military music the march occupies a prominent position, and has been employed, not only to stimulate courage, but also to ensure the orderly advance of troops, from about the middle of the seventeenth century. The use of the march seems to have originated during the Thirty Years' War, and was no doubt an adaptation of the German Volklied, or patriotic song. One of the earliest instances of a rhythmical march is the Welsh war strain, "The March of the Men of Harlech," which is supposed to have originated during the siege of Harlech Castle in 1468. In England the military march was of somewhat later development. Sir John Hawkins, in his "History of Music," tells us that its characteristic was dignity and gravity, in which respect it differed greatly from that of the French, which was brisk and alert.

Some regiments have certain airs which traditionally appertain to them, as, for instance, the quick-step march used by the first battalion of the Royal Scots, called "Dumbarton's Drums." Its origin can be traced back as far as the year 1655, when Lord George Douglas—afterwards

Earl of Dumbarton—was Colonel of the regiment which was then serving under the French King Louis the Fourteenth. It was recalled, however, to England about 1675 by Charles the Second, and embodied in the British army. The march of the Rifle Brigade, "I'm Ninety-five," owes its origin to the regiment being the Ninety-fifth before being renamed the Rifle Brigade. The march of the Thirty-second Foot, or Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, is called "One and All," which is also the motto of the regiment. The air seems to have been composed by a lady residing at Bodmin, and was adopted as a military march in 1811, when the Royal Cornwall Militia volunteered "to a man" for service in Ireland. The Cheshire Regiment treasures the air "Wha wadna fecht for Charlie," in memory of a whilom commander, Sir Charles Napier. One regiment, curiously enough—the Prince of Wales's Own—possesses a march with the revolutionary title of "Ça Ira." This famous song, composed for the Fête de la Fédération in 1789 to the tune of "Le Carillon National," seems to have been used by the Colonel of this regiment during a campaign in Flanders in 1793, and had such an effect in stimulating the ardour of the young soldiers that they succeeded in driving the French across the Scheldt. It is said that the French borrowed the phrase from Benjamin Franklin, who used to say in reference to the American Revolution, "Ah! ah! ça ira, ça ira."

The expense of maintaining a British army band falls partly upon the country, partly on the officers of the various regiments. The Government contributes eighty pounds per annum to the band fund of each regiment, while officers above the rank of subaltern, in addition to a fixed sum on appointment and promotion, each contribute twelve days' pay per annum to the same object. Every band has to find its own reed and brass instruments, the Government allowing only bugles, drums, and fifes for the infantry, and bugles and trumpets for the cavalry and artillery. Bagpipes are provided for the various Highland regiments. The number of drummers and fifers or buglers attached to infantry regiments is about sixteen, and these are under the command of a sergeant-drummer, formerly the drum-major. Cavalry regiments have eight trumpeters under the direction of a sergeant-trumpeter, formerly trumpet-major. In the

same way a sergeant-piper is placed over the five pipers of a Highland regiment. About twenty additional men, one corporal, one sergeant, and a bandmaster, are allowed to give their services to the band by the Government. It is not customary for the full band to go on active service, and in the case of short expeditions and little wars the drums and fifes with the buglers alone accompany the regiment. In cases where the campaign is likely to be prolonged, or where the regiment is going on long service, the members of the band go with it and assist in ambulance duty. A bandsman's pay is the same as that of a private, amounting to about eightpence per diem when the various deductions have been taken into account. Kneller Hall—the home of the famous painter—near Hounslow, is now the training school for those aspiring to be bandmasters, and promising youths also from the bands of different regiments there receive a thorough course of instruction in instrumental music. Boys for the band are recruited from the Duke of York's school, the Hibernian School, Dublin, and other institutions of a similar character, and are often the sons of soldiers in the regiment. Among the best bands are those of the Royal Engineers, the Royal Artillery, and the Royal Marines, and more especially those belonging to the Guards. These bands are all allowed more men than the line regiments, and the bandsmen of the Guards have various privileges, such as that of individually accepting private engagements in plain clothes when off duty. The ordinary engagements of these bands for various functions and ceremonies is a source of considerable revenue, and, especially in London, the position of a bandsman is a very enviable one. The music, which had formerly to be scored and arranged by the bandmaster of the regiment, has now been for many years adapted to the use of bands by various musical journals, the earliest of which was published by Boosey in the year 1846, and the favourite march or waltz of the day is at present never long in appearing in the programme of military music.

A CASTLE OF THE ARDENNES.

I HAD surfeited on battlefields, and mementoes of battlefields and a dead monarchy, and resolved to get from Sedan

into the country with as much expedition as possible.

At the dinner-table of the "Hôtel de France," in Sedan, were five rubicund commercial travellers, all of whom amused me by drinking tar-water, "pour la poitrine, monsieur." They were entertaining gentlemen, but looked as little likely as you can imagine to be suffering from anything in the nature of a chest affection. However, they drank their nauseous fluid, which I, too, tasted and grimaced over, and were civil enough to make my business theirs.

"Monsieur," said one of them, a small man with a large wart on his nose—which looked as if it had known something much more alcoholic than tar-water—"if you have not visited Bouillon, I desire you not to delay to do so."

"Especially as," proceeded another, "there is a diligence which will take you there in less than two hours."

"Two hours, my friend!" ejaculated a third bagman derisively. "It is but seventeen kilometres—how can it require two hours?"

"Because," was the reply, "you ascend, and then descend, and because, further, the carriage takes the mails, which necessitates a stop at La Chapelle, which again necessitates a course of 'chopes'."

"Chopes?" I enquired.

"They call them 'chopes' hereabouts, monsieur. It is, in plain words, a glass of beer. But the beer is not to be recommended."

"By no means. If monsieur will be advised by us, who are travellers of experience in all parts of the Republic, he will drink nothing but——"

"Tar-water, I suppose?" I observed, with a smile of contempt for the liquor in the stone jars.

"Exactly, monsieur."

The waiter at this moment appeared with a new dish, and the information that if the Englishman meant to catch the afternoon diligence for Bouillon, he would have to be "diablement vite." They were a homely little community in the "Hôtel de France"; and when one or other of the bagmen had sought of fault to find with the dish before him, he was wont to call the waiter and expostulate with him by pulling his ear with considerable force. There was no malice or downright ill-feeling in such treatment, for the waiter grinned while he squealed, and the merriment on the faces of the other tar-water drinkers proclaimed that it was done in fun.

I speedily decided that it was better not to miss the diligence than to miss the English beefsteak which was on the menu to follow. English beefsteak is excellent in England; elsewhere it is a mere travesty of the thing. And so, hastily apologising to my good-humoured comrades, and acknowledging their kindly wishes for my comfort and enjoyment, I returned to my bedroom, snatched at my small knapsack, and having paid my bill, hurried through the streets to the starting-place.

Here disappointment met me.

"Monsieur," said the obliging lady of the place, "it is horribly vexatious for you; but it has gone these eighteen minutes."

It was vexatious, though scarcely "horriblement" so. My decision was made in a moment. I had put my hand to the plough, and I would not turn back. What, after all, are seventeen kilometres, on a road of the first class, through scenery that could hardly help being agreeable—since the route lay in the Ardennes—on a gay afternoon of September, and with no other encumbrance than a knapsack weighing five or six pounds all told?

Therefore, without more ado, I plodded through the dusty streets of this famous town, past its disestablished but still very massive fortifications, past its troops of soldiers bound for exercise in the great meadows of the Meuse, which have already seen not a little suffering and bloodshed, through its rather tedious suburb of white houses, and so into the country.

The sun was hotter than I would have wished it to be; but for all that I did not envy the bagmen of the "Hôtel de France" their jovial ease over their tar-water and dessert.

For an hour I was in historic territory. On this side Sedan is fringed with fair hills, having dimpled hollows between them. In the hollows are considerable villages, with some pretension to be called towns. The slopes of the hills are carefully cultivated. The people rear cabbages, kidney beans, onions, and potatoes, as well as much grain. And here and there, amid these signs of more recognisable thrift and industry, are shrewd and precise parallelograms of pine-trees, which look uncommonly well against the blue sky, and help to keep the air both sweet and salutary.

It was just among these hills between Daigny, Givonne, and the other villages that the heat of the battle between the French and the Germans in 1870 was most felt. The Germans, thanks to

Moltke's genius, by successive movements always out-mancœuvred the French, and gradually drove them from one valley and hill to another until they had nothing for it but to retire into the heart of the town itself. The loss in killed and wounded was heavy here.

In some respects this country recalls Waterloo. It is not, of course, anything like as level, though there is dip enough between Mont St. Jean and Planchenoît to excuse the great battlefield of the century from the adjective "flat." But here as at Waterloo the cultivation is very close; and here as there the few trees that appear are enough to give only temporary cover to the bands of skirmishers who were fortunate enough to gain possession of one or other of the little copses.

Daigny is the first village passed. It did not delay me at all. It has a look of newness that checks expectation. Besides, it was extremely full of dust. A high wind had me in the back from Sedan, and I moved for moments at a time like a traveller in a sand storm in the dreadful Persian desert.

After Daigny comes Givonne—scarcely more inviting than its predecessor. It boasts a church, however, nearly sixty years old, with a fair carved pulpit, a concave, dingy white vaulting to its aisle, and a blue-starred dome to its choir. The Givonne washerwomen were hard at work washing in the meagre brook which runs through the village. There were so many of them, and the supply of water was so trivial, that the air was strongly odorous of soap-suds, even when I left them considerably behind me; but that, of course, was mainly due to the wind, which insisted on breathing the sweet aroma into my nostrils when I had almost forgotten Givonne and its incidents.

A little longer and I could brace myself for the pure undiluted country. For as I continued to rise with the road the horizon appeared as a long line of forest, into which anon the thoroughfare graciously plunged.

Here, methought, I should get relief from the sun, which was quite inordinately warm. But it was an illusive hope. The forest trees of the Ardennes do not pretend to cast much shadow unless you plunge bodily into the cool recesses about their bases. And such conduct seemed prohibited by the various notice-boards which hinted modestly at the wealth of game in these desirable coverts.

The village of La Chapelle appeared as the half-way resting-place between France and Belgium. It is a straggling, out-of-the-way little nest, only saved from harassing dullness by the uniforms of the customs officers. These gentlemen, except when a cart or a suspicious pedestrian passes through La Chapelle, have little to do but pay compliments to the loose-waisted and thick-ankled village damsels who cross and recross the broad thoroughfare, for no particular purpose, save to entrap such compliments as are to be had.

I rested at the inn of La Chapelle, and called for a "chope." It was ridiculously inexpensive, and not very good beer. But I enjoyed the brief halt, with the chope and a cigarette, while I watched the mild life of the village unfold itself to me from the inn porch and replied to the remarks of my landlord, who was interested in the vintages farther south.

"La Chapelle," I observed at length, when I caught myself yawning for the third time, "is not very gay."

"It is a grave, monsieur, a perfect grave," was the warm reply.

As the inn porch already—after the ardent heat of the white road—began to feel something like a grave, I paid my reckoning, thanked the good man for his courteous hope that he might see me again, and went on.

The "donane" did not so much as bid me pause. We saluted, and in ten minutes I was alone in the sweet forest solitudes, a contented man.

This part of the Ardennes does not claim to be sensationally beautiful. But it is as pretty as it need be to induce that tranquil peace of mind which even the Swiss mountains often fail to beget.

The trees are small and slim, and of undergrowth, except ferns, there is next to none. But the tree-trunks are gracefully lichened; clumps of purple heath and golden broom adorn the banks by the roadside; there are enough and to spare of winsome simple flowers; and at every hundred yards you hear the melodious gurgle of a brook which, though as infantine in volume as the trees whose roots it waters, is always clear as crystal and sweet as nectar. Dome these serene forest solitudes with a speckless blue sky, and let a gentle wind whisper among the tree-tops, and you may conceive there is enough here to satisfy the man who has no particular craving for the gigantic and the sublime.

The charm of the walk seems to culminate on a plateau, where a stately sign-post of metal marks the actual frontier. Hence it is five and a half kilometres to Bouillon, deep-seated in the forest. A little meadow of the smoothest and greenest grass shows like a bay in the forest. It is pervaded by clear, ice-cool rivulets, some a palm in breadth, and some nearly eighteen inches, and all speeding joyously through the bright grass, the blades of which wash to and fro with the eager currents.

Mortal man cannot resist such lures of natural beauty as these. Without troubling my conscience to determine whether I was trespassing or not, I leaped the low barrier of ferny bank which kept me aloof from this meadow of enchantment; and here, having chosen a low boss of emerald turf crowned by a knot of yellow broom, I lay at full length, with the broom 'twixt me and the sun, and again smoked a cigarette, pondering many things, and sure about nothing, except that I was taking my pleasure in kingly fashion.

I dallied here rather a long time. Then came the descent through the forest. It was more abrupt than the climb from Sedan, and therefore more picturesque. In places sheer walls of grey and brown rock, draped with hart's tongue and other ferns, and with tiny waterfalls at their bases, made a bolder appeal for admiration.

The woods swelled into hills—small, but engaging. At the foot of two or three of these hills a famous old farmhouse appeared, with another road straggling away up the valley to the right. And here for the first time I viewed the Semoys, which may claim to be the most tortuous and charming river of Belgium. A brace of solemn anglers discovered themselves—both to me and any trout indiscreet enough to sail beneath them. The gentlemen flung their flies upon the stream much as a girl throws a stone. It was easy telling they would have but a poor bag of fish in the evening.

Another mile or two and the incomparable nook in the forest occupied by Bouillon is disclosed. The Semoys meanders bravely in the bed of a rather broad meadowy glen with pine-clad hills on the other side of it. Looking down the stream you see a huge castellated crag blocking the whole valley, and also the two or three other valleys which meet here. It is one of the most imposing masses of building in the world, and worthy of the great name of Bouillon which it carries.

The town itself soon appears, clinging to the banks of the river and the rocky flanks which support the castle. No spot could look more delightful after a walk in the sun. The wooded hills close it in on all sides. Of necessity it must be cool, you imagine, as you glance from the rippling river to the refreshing verdure.

It is an old, old place, of course. Twelve hundred years ago one Turpin, who may have been an ancestor of our disreputable Dick, held the rock, and exercised a certain lordship over this part of the great forest. It may be assumed that he was a gentleman of the robber-baron species, who levied comfortable blackmail on all who came within the grip of his retainers. Anyhow, as the forest was in those days notorious as a resort of wild beasts and bandits, Turpin of Bouillon could hardly fail to catch a little of the spirit that animated his neighbours in these wilds.

After Turpin and his succession began the line of Godfreys, which, as all the world knows, eventually gave us the great Godfrey, Prince of Crusaders and gentlemen. The castle does not, as one would expect, yield many legends about Godfrey de Bouillon. But his seat is shown chiselled in the solid rock, out of which so much of the castle itself is hewn; and by it is another humbler seat which tradition assigns to his squire. Here, it is told, Godfrey was wont to sit looking down upon the road which winds towards France. Doubtless, thus sitting, he conceived the idea of joining the rest of Europe's chivalry in an attack upon the Moslems in Palestine.

The Bishops of Liège held Bouillon after the Godfreys. Then came the notorious La Marcks, about whom romancers have romanced so much. In 1591, by the marriage of the heiress of this great family with the Viscount de Turenne, the lordship passed into a Frenchman's hands. Readers of Sully and history in general know full well what a restless, proud fellow this first Duke of Bouillon proved. If Henry of Navarre had been a less generous ruler he would have made short work of the gentleman's head. The Duke was not content to assume to be a king in his own little domain, but he even had the presumption to pose as such outside his particular degree of latitude, and would fain have intrigued with the Queen of England against the majesty of France. The character of this Duke has been skilfully drawn by Sully. Among other points of

eccentricity he was wont, we are told, "of set purpose to express himself in so dark and ambiguous a manner that he could give to what he spoke any sense that he pleased."

Bouillon continued even after this Duke's death as a small sovereign state. It is almost amusing to read that in 1790 a constitution was given to the subjects of the principality, followed, four years later, by the proclamation of the Republic of Bouillon. But this poor little ape among great states could not long hope to preserve its independence. It was soon absorbed by France, and became a mere corner in the Ardennes Department of the French Republic.

Yet once more, however, was there an attempt to dignify the little town with the colossal castle brooding over it. The heir of the Bouillons, like many other French and continental aristocrats, had passed into the service of Great Britain. Until 1814 he was an officer in our navy. In that eventful year, when cataclysms seemed in the ascendant, he returned to Bouillon, and a pleasant farce of restoration occurred, to the joy of the simple inhabitants. Things were to be as they had been, and the Republic of Bouillon was to be forgotten.

The Congress of Vienna finally extinguished Bouillon's yearning after greatness. The duchy was made a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Since 1830 it has been Belgian territory, and Belgian territory it seems likely to remain.

It is well to know this much about the huge ruined pile which towers so grimly to the left hand as one enters the trim, cleanly main street of the town.

But there is yet another phase of Bouillon's history which must be mentioned. I am reminded of it when I enter a neat little café with a commanding view from its window up the Semoys valley. The white-capped old lady who prepared the coffee is not slow to tell about it. She was in Bouillon during those exciting days after the battle of Sedan in 1870.

"Monsieur," she murmurs, as she places the coffee before me, "Bouillon was nothing but a hospital then. They came to us by cartloads, the poor wounded; and they came on their own wounded legs, poor souls, and with them was the Emperor himself, and, poor gentleman, never man looked more disappointed than he!"

"And had you any of the wounded in your house?" I ask.

"Yes, indeed," is the reply. "And there was not a house without one. And up in the bare rooms of the castle they spread them in rows, and doctors came in from Brussels and heaven knows where else; and it was a sad time, my faith, it was!"

The old lady's little grand-daughter had stolen in to listen to this prattle. She had a ball in her hand, but her young sympathies were so aroused by the dame's tale that she let the ball drop, and it stayed unheeded on the floor.

With this latest story in my mind I now climbed towards the castle entrance.

The old place is utterly disestablished at last. It is merely a decayed shell of a baronial castle, with scant traces of its magnificence of three hundred years ago. There is even more of it beneath the natural surface of the rock than above it, though of this latter, in all conscience, there is enough. The great saw-like ridge absorbed into it is honeycombed in every part. Of dungeons there are plenty—dark, despairing holes attained only by staircases hewn out of the rock.

The guide who had me in charge was also concerned with a troop of Belgian exquisites in draughtboard-check suits, knickerbockers, and other articles of attire unusual on the Continent, except where Anglomaniya is strong. These gentlemen made light fun of all Bouillon's dreadful-ness. They screamed over the deep well, with its resounding echoes; laughed at the perpendicular cliffs beneath the desolate chambers; and shivered derisively as they were led into one great hall after another, tapestried with green mould. The pomp of past days was nothing to their imaginations. Even the custodian's mild legends did but excite new laughter in them. They smoked cigars, danced on the turret roofs, and wondered what sort of a cufsine the "Hôtel de la Poste" would afford them in the evening.

For my part I was glad to have done with the interior of the castle and to get down to the river again. Having turned the rocky peninsula, I was in a lovely wooded defile, of which the Semoys filled nearly every inch of the bed. Hence Bouillon's ruin was superb, and apparently impregnable.

The little town chanced to be full to the throat of tourists and pleasure-seekers. Up this glen of the Semoys I chanced upon them at every turn. A trio of soldiers one minute; five sisters of charity the next;

then a party of schoolboys on tramp, washing their tired feet in the not very pellucid stream ere entering the town for a lodging. Where the Semoys makes one of its innumerable bends, and whence the prospect of the castle is amazingly fine, there is a comely little altar in a chapel. Here I found a young woman on her knees. On my return the five sisters of charity occupied her place. It was all very peaceful and suggestive. But for the midges which swarmed in the wood by the waterside towards sunset, it might have been termed ineffably idyllic. The midges, however, were distinctly tiresome. Even while they kneeled and murmured their vesper petitions, the sisters of charity could not help promptly resisting the attacks of these infinitesimal fiends.

With the sinking of the sun the air cooled fast. It became humid, as it was bound to do in such a spot at such a time; and this served as a warning to me that I had not yet secured a bed for the coming night.

And so, disregarding my inclination to watch the soldiers and divers little boys in blue catching fish, I briskly retraced my steps. They were not large, these fish; and I fear not in the best of condition—for the Semoys just here is sadly polluted. But they were, as one angler said, quite good enough for the pot. This youth had both his trouser pockets stuffed full of them, and he was now pitching them into his cap.

It was as I had begun to fear. The "Hôtel de la Poste" was beset with bed-seekers like myself. The landlady told me effusively at what hour the table d'hôte would be served, but she left me much in the lurch when I pressed for an apartment. As it was dark I persisted. At length the landlord came to my aid. He showed me his rooms, which were certainly well furnished with portmanteaus; among others he let me look into the chamber occupied by the unfortunate Louis Napoleon when Sedan was over. It was not exceedingly remarkable. The two beds in two alcoves were attractive with their laced quilts and suggestions of repose. But there was nothing to recall the late Emperor. It may, however, be taken for granted that the young gentlemen whose knapsacks lay on the beds, paid double or treble the usual tariff for the privilege they enjoyed.

A room was finally engaged for me at a meat shop over the way. It was much

more of a state apartment than the Emperor's at the hotel.

Then came the desirable dinner-hour. There must have been fifty of us sighing for our food, and for an hour we sighed in vain. The household were quite overburdened with guests.

I shared a round table with six agreeable young collegians from Namur, in flannel shirts, and with faces, hands, and necks the colour of a chestnut. Our impatience jointly grew unbounded; and I ought perhaps to tell with sorrow of a certain raid we made upon a passing bread-basket—a raid which grievously affected the landlady's calculations.

In the end it was a poor, unsatisfactory meal: a bad dinner for twenty made to serve fifty.

But the bed in the butcher's house was soft and welcome, and to my surprise I alone of living animals and insects found rest and pastime in it.

The next morning, early, I returned to Sedan by the diligence, with the six merry collegians for comrades. They were spread about the roof of the vehicle in an extraordinary manner, and sang and blew a horn with rare zeal when the fit took them.

In Sedan again, at parting with these youths, each with grave politeness expressed the hope that I had enjoyed myself. Not a little of the enjoyment that had actually been my lot in Bouillon and on the road was due to them. But I did not puff them into self-conceit by saying so.

THE BURNING OF THE SHEAS.

AN OLD STORY RETOLD.

TEN years ago the murder of two gentlemen in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, in the broad light of an early Saturday afternoon, riveted the attention of the world on Ireland and its secret societies. One of these gentlemen belonged to an English family distinguished alike for its high position, immense possessions, and the statesmanlike qualities of its members; and had only arrived that day in Dublin in the train of the incoming Lord Lieutenant as Chief Secretary for Ireland. The other was an Irish gentleman, born and bred. Neither, needless to say, had ever done anything to incur the hate or detestation of the men who hewed and hacked them to death. It was long afterwards when the perpetrators were found out, arrested, tried, and brought to the scaffold.

The recent explosion in the detective office at Dublin, where a young constable was blown to pieces, is another instance of the recklessness with which those bent on evil can destroy the lives of men against whom they can by no possibility have a grudge: but whether this outrage is the outcome of a secret society or the fiendish promptings of an individual, time and the enquiry now going on can alone determine.

The course of secret societies in Ireland, as indeed in all other parts of the world, has been marked by blood and ruin. And one of the incidents most strongly characterised by both, is that known in the province of Munster as The Burning of the Sheas.

The Sheas were strong farmers, what might almost in Ireland be called gentlemen farmers, living in a lonely district at the base of the picturesque Slievenamon, in Tipperary. They rented a very large tract of land, some of it heather, some of it grass land, but the largest portion exceedingly fertile and well cultivated. They were much above the average of farmers in general, hospitable, intelligent, and excellent neighbours.

Portion of their large possession was leased to an under tenant named Gorman; and for some reason or other, possibly because they disliked him as tenant, possibly because they needed the land themselves, the Sheas, in an evil hour, determined to eject him—and they did.

Gorman was a man of determined will, reckless and ungovernable passion; and, boiling with hate and fury, resolved to have revenge. Secret societies, at the time, were dotted here and there over the southern province, and to one of these in his immediate neighbourhood Gorman betook himself. The leader, a man named Maher, a cousin of his own and a most truculent scoundrel, introduced him at a midnight meeting to the society; his cause was promptly taken up, and steps taken for the punishment of the Sheas.

Some distance from the Sheas, at a cross-road, stood a public-house kept by a man named Kelly. Though a cross-road it was extremely wild and desolate, and after nightfall few if any ever passed that way. This house was the resort of many of the members of the secret society, but the bonds of secrecy were not sufficiently strong within them to prevent them from talking of their projects and intentions when their tongues got loosened with strong drink. Hints and innuendoes, and open threats, in their cups made it plain

enough that something was in store for the Sheas. The man Kelly knew it, his wife knew it; the neighbourhood was aware of it; the Sheas themselves knew it. It was as well known in an underground sort of way as it is known in a mining town of Arizona that two men intend, at next meeting, shooting one another "at sight." The young men of the Sheas provided arms for themselves and their labourers and farm men, and rested secure. Neighbouring farmers armed themselves to give aid when the time came. No one, it seemed, thought of calling in the authorities—partly because Sir Robert Peel's police force had not then been brought into existence; partly from the dislike the Irish peasantry always feel of appealing for protection to "the Law," and partly because the threatened parties relied on their own strength and bravery to repel any attack—however strongly made.

The twentieth of November, 1821, happened to fall on a Saturday, a day on which the Sheas generally sent to the public-house for small matters—candles, blacking, and such-like—as they might require, and on this day Maher visited the place likewise. Having apparently abundant time on his hands, and no present occupation, he employed himself casting bullets in a mould at the kitchen fire. There was no concealment whatever about his work, and Mrs. Kelly, as a matter of course, saw it.

"Ned," said she, addressing the moulder, "I hope you're not goin' to do any mischief wid these?"

"No, indeed, ma'am; why would I?" was the careless rejoinder.

"And what are you makin' 'em for, then?" asked the hostess.

"Why, Mrs. Kelly, asthor," replied he, "there's lots ov hares on the side ov Slievenamon, an' mightn't I as well have the bullets handy as not?"

"I'm very much afeard it isn't for the hares y' want 'em, Ned; an' if it's fur any thing else——"

But just at this moment the servant of the Sheas, a young woman not long married, entered with a basket under her arm. Mr. Maher had probably been anticipating her advent, and displayed his store of bullets ostentatiously.

"See, Kate," said he, "Mrs. Kelly an' I are afther havin' a comedher about these bullets. She won't b'lieve I'm goin' to use 'em fur the hares. I'll engage y' have plenty ov 'em at the White House."

"Bedad, an' we have that," said the girl pleasantly. "As much as ud fill the biggest potato sack atween this an' Thurles."

"Guns, too?"

"Ay, wan fur ev'ry hand in the house, an' sum to spare. The boys know how t' use 'em, too—mind that!"

Whether that was all Mr. Ned Maher wanted to learn or not, that portion of the conversation ended there. Kate Mullaly was a cousin of Mrs. Kelly; was made very welcome while she remained; and the chat took a triangular turn on general matters. When leaving she shook hands gaily with Mrs. Kelly and Maher, and betook herself pleasantly homewards. The unfortunate hostess seemed still to have a presentiment that there was something ill coming, for before Maher left she besought him, in case of any quarrel between his gang and the Sheas, that her cousin should not be injured, to which he smilingly assented, remarking that there was no danger whatever of a quarrel, but that should one by any chance break out, not a hair of her head should be injured. He would not wish to see a hair of her head injured—indeed, it would be hard to think he would after the pleasant and laughing interview they had had.

From something that occurred at the public-house the following day, Sunday, Mrs. Kelly's uneasiness and forebodings rose to a great pitch, though there was nothing actually tangible on which to ground her fears. It came more from shruggings of the shoulders and liftings of the eyebrows, on the part of some visitors, than spoken words. She mentioned the matter to her husband, who gruffly bade her hold her tongue and mind her own business, adding the somewhat trite, if not unwarranted, statement that a woman's tongue was at the root of all mischief.

Her forebodings were, however, not to be dispelled by a gruff or choleric word, and she spent the first hours of the night in sleepless worry. Towards midnight, unable to control herself, she stole from the side of her sleeping husband, dressed herself silently, and emerging into the darkness, proceeded in the direction of Maher's house. She did not take the road or breen that led to it, but crept timidly through the fields under the friendly protection of the hedges. Finally, torn and dragged, she reached the hedge fronting Maher's house, and there, crouching down, listened. There was light

issuing from the small kitchen window; more, there was the sound of men's voices—angry men's voices, raised in clamorous contention and argument. Presently they ceased, or grew subdued, so that she could not hear them; and whilst straining her ears to catch any word that might indicate their intention, the door suddenly opened and the party issued forth! Outside, they formed themselves in semi-military order—all were provided with arms of some kind, mainly muskets—and at a whispered command they went silently forward. They passed within a few feet of her, where she lay breathless, crouching behind the hedge, well aware that if her presence were detected her life would pay the forfeit. The men, conscious of their strength and the loneliness of the place, delayed putting on their masks until they had emerged from the cabin; and it was during the short interval that the eager eyes of the hiding watcher recognised eight of the party. Out of the cloudless night the eye of the avenger was on them; and from that moment the skibeash (rope) might be said to be weaving for their necks!

But that which frightened the terrified woman most was—the arms which the two hindmost men carried. They were a tin can with live coals of turf, covered over with ashes to keep the fire smouldering, and a sheaf of wheaten straw—the things which poachers usually carried when preparing to “gaff” salmon in the river. She divined what these were for, and for a time consciousness left her. But it speedily returned; and then, at the imminent peril of her life, she followed after the files of men disappearing silently over the crest of the hill. She was unable to follow further than the brow of the hill, looking downward on the lone valley where the house of the Sheas was, and there, panting and terrified, she awaited developments. If a cry could have aroused the inmates of the doomed abode, her glued lips would have been unable to utter it.

It would seem that the gang, having come near the house, stood listening silently in the darkness. The farmhouse—the White House as it was called from its clean white-washed walls, forming a bright contrast to the bleak surroundings of mountain and woodland—was, as were at that time most farmhouses in Ireland, a thatched one, the thick coating of thatch forming a cooling roof in the summer and a snug protection against cold in the

winter. But it was two feet or more thick, and highly inflammable.

The door was not only capable of being locked inside, but was provided with a hasp and staple outside, so that in summer days, when the whole family were occupied in the haggart or elsewhere, the door might be thus readily closed. To fasten this was the first work of the midnight gang; some two or three in their stockinged feet crept to the door, and with two or three blows of a hammer nailed it, so that it could in no possibility be opened from the inside, and then withdrew.

The noise at the door speedily woke the sleeping inmates—it may readily be supposed that their sleep at all times was of the lightest—and seizing their guns from the rack they rushed to the entrance. But the door was firmly fastened, and no efforts of theirs could force it open. At this moment a bright red flame illumined the bawn outside. The haggart, out-offices, and thatched dwelling-house had been fired! That was the object for which the sheaf of wheaten straw and the live coals had been brought!

The scene within the doomed farmhouse passes description. There were seventeen inmates there, and all crowded in stark horror to the door, blocking the way and trampling one another to death. But the door stood rigid, firm before them, nailed hard and fast, and there was no breaking it down. Even if it were otherwise, the block caused by so many crowding against a narrow entrance would of itself have been sufficient to prevent its opening.

The wind was high, and the thatched roof roared on the night in its burning! Only one thing was louder—the shrieks of the roasting inmates. The windows were high and small; there was no chance of egress that way. Even if there were, the villains outside, watching with fiendish glee the blazing homestead, would have fired upon them as they emerged; but in all probability they would have risked that to escape from the broiling fire. Their shrieks rose above noise of wind and flame, and were borne to the ears of the lone watcher crouching on the hill, a quarter of a mile away. What scenes of horror and suffering passed within, until their screams grew fainter and finally died away, will never be known till the great accounting-hour!

The burners did not seem to be satisfied by the burning, but fired indiscriminately at the windows—as possibly some faces

had appeared thereat; the noise of the firing, possibly the noise of the shrieking, too, awoke a farmer named Dillon living some considerable distance off. He rose up, armed his people, and they hurried to the scene of the tragedy. The roof had fallen in, and no living thing was inside the walls. They saw the armed banditti drawn up in the gloom, but, their numbers being small, feared to attack them. They were suffered to depart home in peace.

On their way home they passed by the spot where the crouching figure was still hiding. She heard them laugh and joke as they passed by. When they had vanished in the distance, and their steps could be no longer heard, she fled homewards. For eighteen months she kept the secret in her breast, divulging no word to any of her family of what she had seen—dreading the fate of the Sheas for her own household if she but opened her lips.

The whole country was startled and horrified at this awful business. Government offered a very large reward, and used every means to get at the perpetrators, but in vain. A white terror had fallen on the district, and every mouth was dumb. As an instance of this it may be mentioned that among Dillon's party was a young boy named Butler. He saw that his brother, in the Sheas' employment, had been burned to death, and, anxious to avenge his murder, crept close to the midnight banditti—sufficiently close to recognise amongst them Gorman. At daybreak, wild with sorrow and terror, he burst into his mother's cabin with the news. The first wail of sorrow of the poor old woman, wakened out of her sleep, was followed by a pitiful imploration to her son.

"For Heaven's sake, John, say nothing about Gorman. Keep your lips shut, or they'll murder you too."

It would have been almost better for the innkeeper's wife that they had discovered

and shot her that night than that she should live the possessor of the dreadful secret. Her life was miserable beyond description. At night the shrieks of the burning people rang in her ears. Her cousin Kate Mullaly seemed to wail by her bedside. At midnight, wholly unconscious of herself, she often rose, crept down to the blackened walls of the burned homestead, and sat there till morning, when they found her and brought her home. Maher visited the inn as usual, but the sounds of his voice sent her into hysterics. Still no word to indicate the murderers came from her lips, or any lips!

The evil hour that comes to all takers of human life came at last to them. Mr. Kelly, being a Roman Catholic, went to confession. There the priest refused her absolution until she went and told her story to the authorities; more, laid it a solemn penance on her to go and do so. She went. The magistrate, a Captain Despard, heard her narrative in astounded silence; kept her prisoner in his house until he had his measures completed and the cordon drawn sufficiently tight; and then in one swoop arrested all she had named, and under guards sufficiently strong to prevent rescue, had them lodged by the heels in jail. What the rewards and exertions of the Government could not bring to pass, thus was effected. This happy catch was immediately followed by a King's evidence turning up among the party, and every other member of the secret gang who had not left the country was promptly in irons.

The trial will long be remembered in Munster. The whole dreadful particulars were again brought forth in the light of day; the guilty parties were convicted and sentenced; and a row of hanging men was the avengement outraged justice offered up for the Burning of the Sheas.

Secret societies were stamped out for many a year in Munster.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
A Valiant Ignorance. A Serial		A Bread-and-Butter Miss. A	
Story ... 193, 217, 241, 265		Story in Six Chapters 209, 238, 259, 283	
Explosives ... 196		Old Miss Pettifer. A Complete	
The Making of a Politician ... 200		Story ... 219	
A Missed Spring. A Poem ... 25		The Old Irish Parliament ... 247	
Private History of Bhogeraj		A Visit to a London Eye	
Doosad ... 205		Hospital ... 251	
Naples and the Neapolitans.		Shadowed. A Complete Story ... 271	
In Two Parts ... 220, 256		Municipal and other Lodgings 276	
The Literary Personality ... 225		Silence ... 279	

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CHARLES DICKENS.

NO. 218.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 1893. PRICE TWOPENCE.

A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XII.

THE season, as Mrs. Romaine had told Dennis Falconer, was to be a short one, and its proceedings were apparently to be regulated on the old principle of a short life and a merry one. Gaeties overtook one another in too rapid succession, and an unusually sunny and breezy May and June, with the inevitable action of such weather on human beings, even under the most artificial conditions, rendered these gaieties a shade more really gay than usual.

The atmosphere was not, again, so close as it had been on the afternoon when Dennis Falconer called on Mrs. Romaine, and it is presumable that the weather must have been responsible for her general unusualness of mood on the evening of that day; for if she was not quite herself on the following morning, the touch of self-compulsion in her brightness was so slight as to be hardly perceptible, and a day or two later it had entirely disappeared. Her artificial vivacity, always with its under-current of genuine content, reasserted itself, as though it had never been disturbed.

Certainly if constant stir and movement are conducive to good spirits, there was nothing wonderful in Mrs. Romaine's satisfaction with life. For she had not, as she complained laughingly, a single moment to herself.

"It's a regular treadmill!" she exclaimed gaily one day to Lord Garstin.

"I had really forgotten what a terrible thing a London season was!"

"It seems to agree with you," was the answer. "There is one lady of my acquaintance, and only one, who seems to grow younger every day!"

"You can't mean me," she laughed. "I assure you, I am growing grey with incessantly running after that boy of mine! He is as difficult to catch as any lion of the season. I never see him except at parties."

Julian's intimacy with Marston Loring had grown apace, and it had led to sundry social consequences which were, his mother said, "so good for him." Little dinners at the club, to which he had been duly elected; dinners at which he was now guest, now host; jovial little bachelor suppers made up among the very best "sets." Loring himself was very careful—though he knew better than to make his care perceptible, except in its results—never to allow himself to be placed in the position of a rival to Mrs. Romaine for her son's time and company. He lost no opportunity of making himself useful and agreeable to Mrs. Romaine; now using pleasantly arrogated rights as Julian's friend; now his superior brain-power and knowledge of the world; until he gradually assumed the position of friend of the house. But club life necessarily created in Julian's world interests apart from his mother—interests which she was apparently well content that he should have, so long as his ever-ready chatter to her on the subject revealed that they were all connected with good "sets."

It was furthermore a season of very pretty debutantes, a large majority of whom elected to look upon Mr. Romaine as "such a nice boy," and to exact—or

permit—any amount of slavery from him in the matters of fetching and carrying and general attendance. "You're known to be so profoundly ineligible, you see!" his mother would say to him, laughing. "Nobody is in the least afraid of you, poor boy!" And she looked on with perfect calmness as he danced, and rode, and did church parade; looked on with a calmness which might have been mistaken for indifference, but for the significant fact that she always knew which of his "jolly girls" was in the ascendant for the moment.

Miss Newton had gone home on the day following the meeting at the theatre.

Falconer was to be seen about throughout the season, making his grave concession to the weaknesses of society. Mrs. Romaine and Julian met him constantly, and he was asked to, and attended, the most formal of the dinners given at Queen Anne Street. But the intercourse between him and his "connection," as Mrs. Romaine called herself, was of the most distant and non-progressive type. Julian did not take to him at all. "He is such a solemn fellow, mother!" he said. "He seems to think that I'm doing something wrong all the time." An observation to which Mrs. Romaine replied by laughing a rather forced laugh and changing the conversation.

The last event of the season, as it became evident as the weeks ran out, would be the bazaar in aid of Mrs. Halse's discovery among charities. It was, perhaps, as well that the institution in question was by no means in such urgent need of patronage as might have been argued from Mrs. Halse's demeanour towards it earlier in the proceedings; for that lady's enthusiasm on the subject had suffered severely in the contest with the numerous other enthusiasms which had succeeded it, and the affairs of the bazaar had been pursued by all its supporters with energy which is most charitably to be described as intermittent. Three separate dates had been fixed for the opening day; and, after a great deal of money had been spent in printing and advertising, each of these in succession had had to be abandoned owing to the singular incompleteness of every fundamental arrangement—though, as Mrs. Halse observed impatiently, after the third postponement, there were "heaps and heaps of Chinese lanterns." Finally it was announced for the fifth and sixth

of July; and owing to herculean efforts on the part of half-a-dozen unfortunate men enlisted in the cause, who apparently braced themselves to the task with a desperate sense that if the affair was not somehow or another carried through now, by fair means or foul, they were doomed to struggle in a tumultuous sea of fashionable feminine futility for the remainder of their miserable lives, on the fifth the bazaar was actually opened.

It was late in the evening of that eventful day, and in various fashionable drawing-rooms exhausted ladies stretched on sofas were recruiting their forces after their severe labours. It had been the fashion for the last week or more among the prospective stall-holders to allude to the fatigue before them with resigned and heroic sighs of awful import; consequently they were now convinced to a woman that they were in the last stages of exhaustion. As a matter of fact it is doubtful whether out of the sensations of all the "smart" helpers concerned—with the exception of the devoted half-dozen before mentioned, who had retired to various clubs in a state of collapse—a decent state of fatigue could have been constructed; and the reason for this was threefold. In the first place, so much money had been spent in announcing the dates when the bazaar did not take place, that there was exceedingly little forthcoming to announce the date when it did take place; consequently its attractive existence remained almost unknown to the general public, and the services of the sellers were in very slight demand. In the second place, the greater part of the work which could not be done by proxy was left undone. And in the third place, each lady had been throughout the day so deeply convinced of the "frightfully tiring" nature of her occupation, that she thought it only her duty to "save herself" whenever that course was open to her—which was almost always.

In the drawing-room at Chelsea, very cool and pretty with its open windows and its plentiful supply of flowers and ferns, Mrs. Romaine was lying on the sofa, as the exigencies of the moment, socially speaking, demanded of her, in an attitude of graceful weariness; an attitude which was rather belied by the alert expression of her contented face. She had dined at home—"just a quiet little dinner, you know—cold, because goodness knows when we shall get it!"—with

Julian and Loring at half-past seven. The bazaar did not close until nine, but all the principal stall-holders had thought it their duty to the following day not to wear themselves quite out, and had left the last two hours to the care of one or other of the hangers-on, of whom "smart" women may usually have a supply if they choose; and Mrs. Romaine's quiet little dinner was only one of a score of similar functions, very dainty and luxurious in view of the tremendous exertions which had preceded them, which were being held in various fashionable parts of London. At ten o'clock Loring had taken his leave, declaring sympathetically that Mrs. Romaine must long for perfect quiet after her exertions. It was then that Mrs. Romaine had betaken herself to her sofa and her papers.

"What an immense time it is since we have had such a domesticated hour!"

Mrs. Romaine had laid down her literature some moments before, and had been lying looking at Julian with that curious expression in her eyes which would creep into them now and again when they rested on the good-looking young figure, and which harmonised so ill with the shallow, vivacious prettiness of the rest of her face. She spoke, however, with her usual light laugh at herself, and Julian laughed too as he threw down his magazine and turned towards her.

"It is an age, isn't it?" he said.

During the final agony of preparation for the bazaar, Julian had been in immense request. Not that he was one of the devoted half-dozen, or that he did much definite work; but he was always ready to discuss any lady's private fad with her for any length of time, and to rush all over London about nothing. His exertions, and the exhaustion engendered thereby, had rendered necessary a great deal of recreation at the club. He had repaired thither very frequently of late, instead of escorting his mother home on the conclusion of their tale of parties for the night.

"It is a comfort to think that it is so nearly over!" observed Mrs. Romaine carelessly. It is never worth while, in the world in which Mrs. Romaine moved, to express more than half your meaning in words, and Julian quite understood that she alluded, not to the domestic hour, but to the season. Her words were not prompted by any actual weariness of the round of life she characterised as "it," but the sentiment was in the air—the fashion-

able air, that is to say. She and Julian, in common with the greater part of their world, were leaving London at the end of the week.

"It has been awfully jolly!" said Julian, leaning back in his chair and resting his head against his loosely locked hands. "I had no idea life was such a first-rate business!"

His mother smiled, and there was a strange touch of triumph in her smile.

"It is a first-rate business," she assented, "if one lives it among the right people and in the right position. I imagine you see by this time that it isn't much use otherwise!"

He laughed as though his appreciation of her words rendered them almost a truism to him, and there was a moment's silence. It was broken by Julian.

"It costs a lot of money," he said, in a casual, indefinite way, but with a quick glance at his mother.

"Well, it isn't cheap, certainly," was the laughing answer; "but I think we shall manage." Then noticing something a little deprecating about his pose and expression, Mrs. Romaine added, with mock reprehension, "You're not going to ask me to raise your allowance, you extravagant boy?"

Julian moved, and leaning forward, clasped his hands round one knee as if the uncomfortable and transitory pose assisted explanation. He laughed back at her, but he was looking nevertheless somewhat ashamed of himself.

"No, it's not that—exactly," he began rather lamely. "It's a splendid allowance, mother dear, and I'm no end grateful; but the fact is, there has been a good deal of card-playing lately at the club. I don't care for cards, you know, but one must play a bit, and I have been rather a fool. Look here, dear, I suppose—I suppose you couldn't let me have two hundred, could you—before we go away, you know?"

"Two hundred, Julian! My dear boy!"

There was a strong tone of surprise and remonstrance in Mrs. Romaine's voice, and there was also a very distinct note of annoyance; but all these sentiments seemed rather to apply to the demand, which was apparently unseasonable, than to the desirability of the transaction. She was neither startled nor distressed.

"It is young Fordyce, mother," continued her son deprecatingly. "It was awfully foolish to play with him, he's so

abandoned the manufacture when an accident showed him a way through his difficulties.

Sundry pots of jelly were being forwarded to some public works by Nobel's own cart and horses. To secure the jars from fracture they were carefully packed in sand, but on the way one of the jars broke, and its contents were found to have been completely absorbed by the sand about it. Struck with this result, Nobel conceived the idea that the sand itself, thus charged with nitrate, might be found the ideal explosive. And thus it proved, and to the new substance Nobel gave the name of dynamite, a name henceforth to be of world-wide fame, and for good or ill to make for itself a place in the history of the century.

Dynamite, it must be owned, has in its way done good service for civilisation. The great works of modern engineering would hardly have been possible without the aid of high explosives, of which dynamite is the prototype. Tunnelling, rock cuttings, blastings of all kinds were greatly facilitated by the new explosive, in which power is stored with so much greater compactness than in gunpowder. In mines and quarries all over the world dynamite in some of its forms has practically superseded gunpowder. The industrial demand has brought into the market many modifications of the original type. The earth basis of true dynamite has been replaced by sawdust, sugar, starch, charcoal, and dozens of more or less effective mixtures; in fact, almost any absorbent substance will form a vehicle for nitro-glycerine.

As might be expected, the military administrations of the different European powers kept an eye upon the development of the new explosive. The State laboratories of France, after many years of trials and experiments, have evolved the powerful substance known as *mélinite*, the composition of which is an open secret, while its merits as compared with dynamite consist in the superior stability of its base, which it is claimed will stand the shock and heat of being fired from heavy guns as a charge for shells. The Austrians, too, have a new explosive called *écraélite*, warranted to "*écraser*" any number of the "enemy." Probably the authorities at Woolwich have something "up their sleeve" of a like nature.

But the successes of our own military chemists have been chiefly in the direction of gun-cotton, of which there is a con-

siderable Government factory at Waltham Abbey. The invention of cotton-powder preceded that of nitro-glycerine, but it was so uncertain in character as to be practically useless, till Professor Abel, the chemical adviser of our War Department, invented and patented a new process of manufacture which has made the substance available as a military explosive, especially as a charge for torpedoes and submarine mines of every description. Many other cellular substances as well as cotton can be charged with nitrates and made to do duty as explosives, and it is in this direction that we must look for the "smokeless powder" which is to be one of the features of the next great war.

It was evident from an early period in the history of these new explosives, that they were destined to become a formidable weapon in the hands of those who, for whatever reason, were at war with society and enemies of existing institutions. But the first serious dynamite explosion was planned for purposes of sordid gain. A person engaged in the foreign trade of Bremerhaven conceived the idea of shipping a number of cases of worthless goods and insuring them for a large amount, while a case of dynamite, concealed within one of the bales, should be detonated by a clockwork arrangement at the end of a certain number of days, and thus send the unfortunate ship with its crew and all it contained to the bottom of the sea. The plan was spoilt by the premature explosion of the case of dynamite on the quay at Bremerhaven, with loss of life and great damage to property. The author of the plot committed suicide on the failure of his scheme. The affair caused much alarm at the time, and led to many precautions being taken in shipping goods from unknown consignees.

The next striking example of the terrible power of the new explosives was the assassination of the Czar, Alexander of Russia, on the thirteenth of March, 1881. The Czar was being driven about one p.m. from the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg, and had reached the Catherine Canal, when an explosion took place just behind the carriage, wounding the horses, and killing one of the Czar's escort. The Emperor alighted from the shattered carriage. "Thank Heaven I am untouched," he replied to those about him. The youth who had thrown the bomb, who carried a revolver and dagger in either hand, was in the grasp of a soldier, and surrounded by

an excited crowd. The danger seemed past when, as the Czar was enquiring into the condition of the wounded, of whom many were stretched helpless around, another young man threw something at his feet which exploded, and left the Czar mangled and bleeding on the ground.

The feeling that a new and terrible power was abroad in the hands of political or social fanatics spread itself throughout Europe, and was intensified, as far as England was concerned, by the catastrophe that befell the "Dottrel," sloop of war, which was blown up off Sandy Point in the Straits of Magellan on the twenty-sixth of April, 1881, only eleven men being saved out of the whole crew. The cause of the explosion has never been fully ascertained, but it is due to the dynamiters, who boasted of the achievement, to state that appearances pointed to an accidental explosion.

In Russia the Nihilists kept up the terror of their name, and even in Germany, where the Emperor William was personally popular, dynamite conspiracies were on foot. The Emperor William had a narrow escape at the opening of the Niederwald Monument in 1883. A drain beneath the road along which he passed was packed with dynamite, but the conspirators failed to ignite it, and the Emperor passed over it in safety.

In the same year, 1883, began what we may call the epidemic of explosions in England. The opening scene was at the Government offices at Whitehall on the night of the fifteenth of March, when an explosion occurred which spread consternation in Westminster, and gave the Houses of Parliament a shaking. The morning light showed a great smash at the corner of the Local Government offices, all the windows smashed, and official dockets peeping out of bare openings in the walls. King Street, the entrance of which is opposite the scene of the explosion, bore a shattered, wrecked appearance, with windows smashed and frames starting out of the surrounding brickwork. Happily no human being was touched, and the same good fortune attended an explosion at "The Times" office on the same night.

In the following month the discovery at Birmingham of a secret manufactory of nitro-glycerine seemed to show the source of the danger, and the arrest of those connected with it gave hopes that the series of explosions would come to an end.

But, although enough nitro-glycerine had been seized to lay all London in ruins, some had probably been saved for future operations. Dynamite, in one or other of its forms, was then so freely distributed that there was no great difficulty in obtaining a supply for any purpose for which it might be wanted.

The next attempt, if it had any definite aim at all, seems to have been intended to overawe the railway companies. For on the night of the twenty-sixth of February, 1884, there was an explosion of dynamite in the cloak-room of the Victoria Station. A number of bags and portmanteaux were torn to bits, but nobody was a penny the worse for the explosion. But the occurrence suggested a general examination of the luggage left at the cloak-rooms of the various railway stations in London, resulting in the discovery of portmanteaux charged with dynamite at Charing Cross, Paddington, and Ludgate stations. In each case a clock had been arranged to detonate the charge at a given time, but in such an ineffective fashion that all the clocks had stopped in transit.

Again, on the thirtieth of May in the same year a charge of dynamite was exploded in the area of the Junior Carlton Club in St. James's Square, and another against Sir Watkin Wynn's house in the same square. Again the result was only broken windows and consternation, which was probably all that the conspirators desired, and the same result attended an almost simultaneous explosion in Scotland Yard—the old establishment—when the "Rising Sun" public-house was wrecked, while the office and officers of police escaped unhurt. At the same time a series of explosions broke out in Canada, and the general public began to feel that things were getting warm. Towards the end of the year London Bridge was attacked. Three conspirators—not muffled in cloaks, but wearing the ordinary garb of industrious citizens, and carrying the inevitable portmanteau—hired a boat on the Surrey side, and in the hazy darkness of five forty-five on a winter's afternoon, rowed to the second arch of London Bridge from the same side of the river. It is the practice of the engineers of the French "Ponts et Chaussées" to leave chambers in the masonry of any new bridges they may build, to facilitate their being blown up on the advance of an enemy. Probably this idea had not occurred to the builders of London Bridge; but, anyhow, below high-

water mark there are recesses in the masonry which seem just adapted for the purpose. The dynamiters had been accurately informed as to this, but their information was hardly up to date, as recently the recesses had been covered with iron gratings as a matter of precaution. So that all that the conspirators could effect was to hang up their bag of dynamite under the arch and row away. It is said that the explosion not coming off as quickly as they expected, the conspirators rowed back with the intention of affixing a fresh fuse, when the dynamite exploded and seriously, if not mortally, injured one of the party. But, as the gentlemen in the boat have not yet published their memoirs, it is not possible to speak with certainty as to the details of the exploit. Anyhow, London was let off again with a big noise and a big fright.

The explosions that followed within a few short weeks were far more serious. The fine crypt beneath St. Stephen's Chapel, the site of the Chapel being now the corridor leading from Westminster Hall to the central lobbies of the Houses of Parliament, was the scene of the next attempt. The twenty-fourth of January, 1885, was Saturday, on which day the public is admitted to see the splendours of Parliament House. One of the public carried a black bag, which he deposited on the floor of the crypt—recently restored and also open to the public. A lady saw the bag with smoke issuing from it. Constable Cole bravely seized it, carried it into the hall at the imminent risk of destruction, and threw it from him to the floor of the hall, where it exploded, wounding the brave constable and damaging the hall, but occasioning no further casualties. At the same time another charge of dynamite exploded in the House of Commons itself, again happily with no fatal results. On the same day the Tower of London was open free to the public, and also to the dynamiter who left his bag in the middle story of the White Tower and ran away. Another explosion, with minor casualties and major panic, followed. As other public buildings, the Post Office, the British Museum, the Inland Revenue Office, were threatened with like attempts, there was a kind of state of siege among the Government Departments. Detachments of Guards, with their formidable bearskins, marched up and down, the lobbies of the various offices were lined with police, detectives flitted to and fro, and everybody with a black bag

was subject to detention and rigorous examination.

One result, indeed, which followed from this natural scare was to discredit the carrying of black leather bags. Before that date the custom was almost universal; the lawyer carried his papers, the Civil servant his luncheon, the commercial man his correspondence, in these convenient little receptacles. You might almost gauge a man's progress in the world by his bag. A step towards success involved a new black bag with patent lock, etc.; when his bag became worn and shabby, as surely his fortunes were on the declining scale. But now the black bag fell into disgrace. He who carried one was avoided, especially in railway carriages. If there was anything in his bag that clicked he would be pointed out to the police as a dangerous character.

Happily the dynamite troubles seem, although it does not do to boast, fairly laid to rest so far, at least, as England is concerned. It is not quite the case in Ireland, where Christmas Day had a surprise for Dublin in the shape of a dynamite explosion in the lower Castle Yard, resulting unhappily in the death of a detective officer. A previous explosion, also in Dublin Castle, on the last day of December, 1891, wrecked the office of the Treasury Solicitor, but damaged no human creature. Indeed, the dynamiters with whom we have to deal seem to avoid, as far as is possible in their dreadful trade, the sacrifice of human life, and have none of the uncompromising courage and atrocity of the dynamiters of Paris.

THE MAKING OF A POLITICIAN.

DURING that legendary period known as "once upon a time," in "great families" it appears to have been the habit to map out the futures of the sons upon certain prescribed lines, as a mere matter of course. One son always had to be a politician—a statesman it was probably called—another always had to be a soldier, a third always had to go into the Church. The "family" had a pocket borough of its own, which, of course, one of the sons of the house was bound to fill. Then there was the family living, and at least one commission could be had for the asking. Thus it came about that, in those halcyon days, budding politicians were, so to speak, marked men, even from their earliest hours, and were

specially trained for the work which they would have to do. They trained statesmen then as we train pugilists now. There was a regular prescribed course of training through which they had to go. It was taken for granted that no one but a "gentleman" could be a statesman—or even a politician. The embryo legislator went, as of course, to a public school, where some attempt was made to teach him all languages, except those which would be likely to be of any use to him, and especially his own. From the public school he passed to a University, if only in an ornamental sense. Leaving the University, accompanied by a bear-leader, he went on what was called the "grand tour." That "grand tour" appears to have been regarded in a light which we find it a trifle difficult to understand. A trip abroad was, in those days, guaranteed to do much more than it is guaranteed to do to-day. When the young gentleman returned home, the politician was trained. That "grand tour," acting as a sort of magical elixir, had finished the job. The "rising statesman" was slipped into the pocket borough, and for the rest of his life he ruled, and he was qualified to rule, his native land.

Nowadays, our politicians are not trained as they used to be. For one sufficient reason—there are no pocket boroughs. Probably few of the latter-day sons of our "great families" are destined from their earliest hours to be immolated on the altar of their country's politics.

What would be the use of it? One might go on the "grand tour" over and over and over again, and yet remain without a seat to the last day of his life. At least, such is the theory. Since, then, the old methods are forsaken in the present year of grace, how are our politicians trained? In other words, how comes a man to be a politician at all, a maker of his country's laws? The answer is, I fancy—in a good many ways. From the point of view of the irreverent outsider, funny ways some of them are.

Johnes—he writes it Johnes, although his father didn't—Johnes was a dealer in stocks and shares. He made a heap of money—such a heap that he made up his mind to "cut" the house and get clear off with his booty before the pendulum had time to swing, and some friendly colleague made "a bit" out of him. He did. He retired into private life. How it bored him! He was a clever fellow—in his way, a very clever man indeed. He went on

the "grand tour"—in the modern style. He wandered about the queer corners of the world for two whole years, and, while wandering, he thought things out. What was he to do with life, now that he had won for himself the right to make the most of it? He did not mind a little of what is called society. But of that he felt that enough was as good as a feast. The rôle of country gentleman he loathed—it meant stagnation. Rather than stagnate, it would be better to go back to stocks and shares. He liked to see a good race as well as most men. He shot, hunted, fished fairly well. But as to devoting the rest of his life to the pursuit of sport, he felt that, so far as he was himself concerned, it was out of the question. He had no particular hobby of any sort. What should he do? He would be hanged, he exclaimed in a sudden flash of inspiration, if he would not try politics. It was the humour of the thing, almost as much as anything else, which appealed to him. He had the instincts, and the genius, of a gambler. He had always understood that, in many respects, the game of politics was as big a gamble as a man could want. It offered abundant opportunities for excitement—and excitement of some sort was as the very breath of Johnes's nostrils. It gave a man a certain sort of position. And, if it were followed up, as Johnes always followed up everything which he went in for, it gave a man a career in life. So, between the evening and the morning of a certain day, Johnes became a politician. And it was after he became a politician that the laugh came in.

The politics of the "great families" were settled at the Flood. It was written in time that unto eternity they were to be Whigs—or Tories. The Johneses in this respect never were predestined. His politics had not been made for Johnes. Johnes had to make his own. It is true enough that, in a mild sort of way, he had always been Conservative; he had even voted Conservative when he voted at all. So he decided, on the whole, that perhaps it would be about as well if he remained Conservative. On the other hand, he did not know much about that sort of thing, and he was not quite clear, in his own mind, how City men of his stamp were regarded in the Conservative strongholds. He was still in the position of a man who, hesitating, is lost, when he encountered an acquaintance who offered to put him up for the Two Hundred and

Seventy Club. So the acquaintance put Johnes up, and the thing was done. Last election Johnes stood as a violent Radical. If I remember rightly he took up Total Abstinence, Sunday Closing, One Man One Vote, Disestablishment, Triennial Parliaments, Payment of Members, Free Food for the Masses, Inspection of Music-halls, and Trafalgar Square. No, he did not get in; but I do not think he is dissatisfied, though I fancy he is reconsidering his position. At the next election I should not be at all surprised to see him climb off the Radical platform and off some of his other platforms, too. In time I dare say he will get in, though possibly on a Tory ticket. Once in, it is quite on the cards that he will make his mark. If he rides to a fall, he will probably have his own over cleverness to thank. Though, in my judgement, Johnes runs a very good chance of being the future greatest statesman this age and this land has seen.

That was how Johnes was made a politician. Let us take some one else—this time a prominent man—and “try back” to his beginnings. Who shall we take? There is Bounder, one of the smartest debaters, if not one of the greatest orators we have—Bounder, the man of the people. Let us take Bounder. Principally for this reason, that Bounder is a type, a representative of a class of men who form, at a moderate estimate, some sixty or seventy per cent. of England’s heaven-sent rulers.

It is quite on the cards that Bounder will one day be Prime Minister. It is by no means certain what party he will represent on that august occasion. The fact is, Bounder calls himself one thing, and his friends and enemies are apt, now and then, to call him another. Bounder is a power, not only in the House, but also in the country. And so he ought to be. He represents the Great Middle Class, Commerce, the Art of Making a Fortune; he is a most respectable man is Bounder—in his way. He dresses so well, neat as ninepence sort of man. His presence of mind is, perhaps, his strongest point. No one ever put Bounder to confusion, and never will. He began on the vestry, then rose to be J.P., then commenced his famous manoeuvres in the local field of politics. As an outside politician he was one of the dodgiest dodgers who ever yet was known, and since he engineered himself into the House, he has certainly

never given a living soul the slightest cause to forget his former reputation. Bounder is a Radical, on the popular lines of to-day. He is one of that large group of rich men who are pledged to Raise the Masses, at absolutely no cost to themselves, and who manage to spend on luxurious living some fifty thousand pounds or so a year while doing so. Bounder is a great authority on the land laws. Having no land of his own, he is anxious that land, generally, should be placed more within the reach of the people. He has no great admiration for the Income Tax, as he has stated publicly on so many memorable occasions; the obnoxious impost certainly must make a dreadful hole in Bounder’s income. There is one thing to be said for Bounder; he is a man of wide toleration. Not an anti-everythingite, nor one of those who “compound the sins they are inclined to, by damning those they have no mind to.” That is one reason why I, for one, feel sure that a great future is in store for Bounder. I do not know what his principles are—and by that I mean that I do not even know what he pretends that his principles are—except that I am morally persuaded that the words “Bounder’s Benefit” are written in letters of flaming fire upon his heart; but I am convinced that, in the not far-off future, a majority of Englishmen will insist upon having, as a ruler, a “statesman” who will be willing to let them alone; who will suffer them, in a great measure, to rule themselves; who will not attempt to make them live the life which he and his particular friends may like to live; and who will not compel them to do the things which, because they suit his constitution, he takes it for granted will suit theirs.

A wide field for consideration is opened when we begin to reflect how, in their beginnings, some politicians were made. What made Oakins a politician? Oakins, the end and aim of whose being is, as he phrases it, the total eradication of the tobacco plant from off the surface of the earth. Oakins thinks that all the crime, and all the suffering, and all the misery of the world come from the use of tobacco. Take away tobacco, and, according to Oakins, “that would be Heaven,” not only for Oakins, but for all of us. The universal panacea, according to Oakins, is not somebody’s pills, or Tickle’s ointment, but “down with tobacco.” That comes first. All the rest—if there is any

rest!—comes afterwards. The joke of the thing is, that Oskins is not an inmate of an asylum for idiots, he is an inmate of the House of Commons—a politician; and there are quite a number of politicians who, in one respect, are just like Oskins, they all have universal panaceas to offer.

There is Slapton, who has been crying aloud for years, "Open everything on Sundays!" That seems to be his remedy for, at any rate, most of the evils which beset humanity. "Give the people free concerts on Sunday afternoons," cries Slapton, "and popular entertainments at popular prices on Sunday evenings, and see how much happier, and better, the world would be." Clapton, on the other hand, declares—and he represents that declaration in the House of Commons—that, to ensure the future welfare of the human race, the one thing needful is to shut up everything on Sundays—everything, that is, except the chapels and the churches. He would have no trains running on what he, oddly and, so far as I understand the matter, ignorantly, insists upon calling "the Sabbath day," no omnibuses, no cabs, no hotels open, no clubs, no public parks, no public institutions—in fact, no nothing. From what I have been able to gather from the—thank goodness!—little I have read of Clapton's numerous public utterances, having shut up everything—except the chapels and churches—Clapton would, probably, proceed to compel, by Act of Parliament, every person to attend some form of religious service at least twice each Sunday. I am not clear what form of religious service it would be. I suspect that a man's choice would ultimately be narrowed to that form of religious service which Clapton honours with his own great presence.

How came such men to be politicians? How were they made? Seriously, one is disposed to believe that, nowadays, however it may have been once upon a time, one qualification which goes to the making of a politician is an insatiable desire to thrust one's fingers into other people's pies; a deep-rooted yearning to mind everybody else's business, not except, but as well as, one's own. As we moderns manage things, in this "right little, tight little" island, a born busybody is within measurable distance of being a born politician. Get a bee in your bonnet, and, if you glance into some men's dictionaries, you will find that you are

a statesman, ready made. You must have a "cry," that is all you want, a "cry." It is impossible to go to the country without a "cry." But with a "cry," it is possible that you may reach the Treasury benches in half-a-dozen strides. Think of the "cries" there are. Think of the men, in the present House of Commons, each of whom represents a "cry" of his own, from A to Z, from the interests of Agriculture to the principles of the Zollverein. The more successful politicians—as politicians go—play their game on some such lines as these. They get a "cry." If such a "league" does not already exist, they promote a "league" to support the "cry." They scour heaven and earth for subscriptions to support the "league." The "league" makes itself such an insupportable nuisance both inside the House and out of it, that the politician whom it represents, and who represents it, has to be conciliated.

We are, men, women, and children, all of us, "mixed pickles." Beyond doubt, in each of us there is a spice of humbug. Should the days of the fairies return, and should, on a full night, that spice of humbug be taken clean out of the House of Commons, what revelations would be made to an astonished country! What sights would be seen! How many men would there be found who believed, really and truly believed, with that faith which moves mountains, in their own "cries," who believed in their own missions, in their own universal panaceas? Would there be one man found who, in that hour in which the cold, dry light of absolute truth was shining down upon the whole assembly, would be able to assert that he believed that his pet scheme would do all that he had claimed for it? Would there be one who would be able to assert that he had been as much in earnest, as single-minded, in his preaching, as he would have had the world believe? Above and beyond all, would there be one who would be able to assert that he had taken up the trade of politics only for his country's sake, and not one jot nor one tittle for his own?

One can picture such a scene. One can conceive the usual talkee-talkie going on, and then, in an instant, the fairy visitation. One can see with the mind's eye the crowd of startled faces; the change coming over the spirit of the scene; as it were, the sudden lifting of unseen curtains; the look which each man

gives at his neighbours' faces; his astonishment at what he sees written there. If the gallery men only kept their heads, and faithfully printed all the observations which reached their ears, what a marvellous debate would be reported in the papers which are placed upon the nation's breakfast-tables in the morning!

Let us set down naught in malice. But who, who has had only even occasional peeps behind the scenes, can doubt that our rulers, taking them in the lump, have scarcely a particle of the faith which marks certain sections of the ruled? Study the division lists. Notice the steady, and even admirable persistence, with which Popton supported the Cheap Cheese Bill. Why? Do you suppose it was because Popton believed in it? If you do, you are an innocent indeed. You are aware that there has been a strong "cry" in favour of the Cheap Cheese Bill. It has been stated, over and over again, with ever-increasing vehemence, that if the Cheap Cheese Bill only became law, one would be able to purchase three pounds of the best cheese for a penny, wars would cease, and the country would thrive. Popton's own private opinion, as he has frequently expressed it to his intimates, is, that there never was such nonsense as that Cheap Cheese "cry." "But if they want it," Popton was wont to say, "why, let them have it." So Popton voted for it. There is no profession of faith to which a politician would not be willing to attach his signature, if he thought that there were enough people asking for it. Examine the records of our more prominent politicians, living and dead, and see for yourself if it is not so. Politicians, like barristers, having received their briefs, are prepared to do their very best for their clients. One, now and then, throws up his brief. But the thing is rare. Whether they are briefed for or against, seems, as a rule, to be to them a matter of complete personal indifference.

One may doubt if an eminent politician has any deep-rooted political opinions whatever of his own. I sometimes think that, of all men living, the eminent politician has the least belief in politics. I fancy that, if Bounder had a really free hand, he would be willing to offer his support to any scheme of legislation of any sort or kind, holding the simple faith that it would not make one pin's worth of difference either one way or the other. Upon that point, I wonder how many people are

of Bounder's way of thinking. I, for one, am disposed to pair with Bounder. I seriously doubt if, after you have done with the four R's, the rudiments, legislation has any effect whatever upon the life of a nation—that is, I not only doubt whether people can be made moral by Act of Parliament, but I doubt if they can be made anything by Act of Parliament. And I am conscious of an absolute conviction that, at any rate, only an infinitesimal minority of the Members of the House of Commons believe they can.

The men who nowadays represent what are called "labour interests," have they any faith in the divinity of Acts of Parliament? I wonder! Some folks seem to entertain an idea that the millennium can be brought about by Act of Parliament. I suspect that that idea is as old as creation, and still we are about where we were. If that particular section of a class which arrogates to itself the title of "labouring class"—if I am not a "labourer," I wish to heaven that some one would revise our dictionaries!—is better off this year than it was a hundred years ago, it is still a fact that it was quite as well off two hundred years ago, although it was worse off again if you turn the two hundred into three. The pendulum swings; classes, like individuals, are up to-day and down to-morrow. But that fact has nothing to do with Acts of Parliament. It never did have, and it never will. There is a power which shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will, but there is reason to doubt if that power has even a nodding acquaintance with the pranks and prancings of the British House of Commons.

Let it not be supposed that I am suggesting that politicians, as a class, are worse than other men. Not a bit of it. In this world, as it is at present constituted, we must all of us be something, and why should not some of us be politicians?

I once heard a story which throws a lurid light upon the little that, in the present year of grace, is wanted for the making of a politician. There was a certain village cobbler—cobblers, from time immemorial, have, almost beyond all other men, had "views" on the government of peoples. This particular cobbler was a perfect fire-brand. He was for "Down with everything," especially with the gentlemen, whoever they might be, who happened to be in. No Minister ever did anything that pleased this cobbler, and never would, or ever could. He was especially great at

disturbing a meeting. His fame travelled over all those parts. When Sutor had been enjoying a sufficiency of "sixpenny," he could "do" for any meeting single-handed, until his friends and his enemies induced him to take himself head-foremost down the steps outside. It was understood that Sutor was good at argument on a pint, but that half a gallon made him as red-hot, vehement, emphatic, and earnest-minded a politician as ever lived.

Half a gallon! Well, that is something, anyhow. Sutor only became a "regular" politician when he began to lose his head. One may be forgiven for suspecting that many a man stands thereabouts with Sutor. A good many people seem to become politicians only when they have begun to lose their heads, and having become politicians, and continuing politicians, they continue, in a certain sense, to lose their heads, until, in some subtle way, they actually change their shapes and become quite different sort of men. They look at the world and the things in it with a distorted, that is, a political, vision. They are apt to altogether lose, not only their sense of proportion, but even of sane perception. And, really, to listen to them—to most of them, at any rate—you would think that they actually become able to persuade themselves, not only that black is white and that white is black, but that yesterday two and two made ninety-one, that to-day they make forty-three, and that to-morrow they will make nothing at all.

A MISSED SPRING.

SPRING flowers? Beloved, lay them here,
And let me clasp with pressure dear
The hand that pulled for me
These bonny blossoms—snowdrops white,
Blue violets, yellow aconite,
And frail anemone.

From wood and garden that we know,
You gathered them before the snow
Has melted in the sun;
While yet the skies are grey above,
You gathered them with thoughts of love,
For your poor wearied one.

Spring flowers! Ah! loyal heart and true,
Spring flowers for me, who never knew
The gladness of life's spring;
Who never felt the sunshine warm,
Whose youth was wrapped in cloud and storm,
The darkest fate could bring.

Unmeet for me. Yet lay them here,
Close to my hand, and draw a-near
With your grave, tender smile;
Nay, closer yet, that I may trace
Each feature of the well-known face,
Although I sigh the while.

Time-worn, but resolute, I see
The face that makes earth heaven to me
Through these my shortening days.
Grief-worn, but patient, it has cheered
My heart that doubted, shrank, and feared
In life's bewildering maze.

It might have made my summer bliss—
Ah, dearest! take it not amiss,
That I am sad to-day.
We met too late—dull autumn's time
Had touched our lives with chilling rime,
Our skies were bleak and grey.

We met too late—for us no spring
Might lead to summer blossoming;
And yet it might have been!
If I had known you when the flowers
Were budding in life's early hours,
And all hope's leaves were green!

It might have been! But ah! not now.
Too late, too late, for lover's vow,
Too late for wisely kiss.
Too late for dreams of love and home,
"The time of singing-birds is come,"
Sweet music I must miss.

Too late! But see! I take from you
The snowdrop white, the violet blue,
The pale anemone.
And, dear, I think that elsewhere,
A spring eternal, new and fair,
Doth wait for you and me.

PRIVATE HISTORY OF BHOGERAJ DOOSAD.

(INDIAN SYCE.)

BHOGERAJ DOOSAD was the name in which the subject of this narrative rejoiced, and which indicated the individual who for many years acted in the capacity of syce, or head-groom, in my modest establishment in the far East—that is to say, in Upper Bengal. When he first appeared on the scene he was about eighteen or nineteen years of age, well-featured, and symmetrical—indeed, unusually so—and might have figured as an Adonis among those of his complexion, for he was of a dark mahogany. His expression was pleasing and intelligent. He was married, I need hardly add, and presently became the parent of a little girl.

For a year or two nothing particular seemed to interrupt the even tenor of his way, but as time passed I noticed that the rounded outlines of his figure, at first almost girlish in their softness, were gradually giving place to those more muscular and perhaps more manly, if at the same time less comely, as if the cares of the world and of actual life were only now beginning to tell upon him. He was by degrees also developing a little amiable weakness for occasional turns of hilarity along with one or two social chums in the persons of his fellow-grooms,

in which palm-toddy played an important part. Of a quiet evening he would wake the welkin with his sonorous voice singing the love-lyrics of his native village, while his friends led up the chorus, and the other servants sat and listened admiringly from a distance. As his voice was rather musical and his ear accurate I rather enjoyed these songs, and did nothing to interrupt them. If any long interval occurred to show that they were flagging, and that their exponent was rather depressed, a gift of a rupee or so was always sufficient to set them going again, indicating, I am afraid, too surely where and how a part of that rupee had gone. However, the gentle stimulus did not seem to do him any harm, and perhaps did good, as some variety from the humble food which forms the usual diet of the average Indian villager. At all events, after such little hilarities he always seemed bricker for a day or two following, rather than the reverse. As a servant he was active and equal to every emergency.

The first thing that rather startled me in Bhogeráj's private career was, after he had been about four years in my service, when news was brought to him from his now distant village that he had become the happy parent of another daughter. Whereupon, instead of rejoicing as he might have been expected to do, and feasting his friends, he figuratively tore his hair, actually and really anathematised his ill-luck, and sent a cruel message back by the bearer of the news, instead of the funds which were asked for, saying that he would neither see nor have anything more to do with his wife. "He wanted a son; was he to be disgraced with daughters always coming, which were useless?" Shocked as I was at such a spirit, I could hardly believe he would act upon it, till, about six weeks later, his wife herself appeared on the scene with her infant child in her arms and the other by her side. She had come for funds, having been surprised at the long absence of any, especially at such a time, and hardly crediting the report that was brought to her. But Bhogeráj was obdurate. He turned a deaf ear to her appeals, and met her with looks sullen and relentless. Nor would he take the slightest notice of the children she placed down before him in the hope of moving him to compassion. At length, when the poor woman saw that matters had really reached a crisis, she cast aside the diffidence peculiar to her sex in the

country, and brought her complaint before me, in the hope that I might be able to influence Bhogeráj in the right direction. Accordingly I sent for him, and confronted him with his wife and children; but when questioned, remonstrated with, and threatened in turn, he gave me courteously to understand that I might beat him, dismiss him, that no matter what was done to him, he would have nothing more to do with his family. So, when this last hope was exhausted, the poor woman went away with her children on her henceforth separate road in life, taking with her, however, his now due month's pay, which I gave her along with a few added rupees. And as this was the first page of Bhogeráj's married life, so was it the last I heard or saw of his first family. Then, very soon it came to my ears that he had contracted a liaison in the village—not his native village, but that nearest my bungalow—and that with a woman of rather light reputation, and this now fully accounted to me for his previous heartless and seemingly inexplicable conduct; conduct which far exceeded the usual discontent of the Bengalee, and, indeed, generally of the native of India, with a family of daughters; and it besides lowered Bhogeráj still another degree in my estimate of him. This new friendship of his, however, did not last long. It had hardly begun when it ended, and in a way that brought grief and shame to Bhogeráj, which were described as a just retribution for his desertion of his wife and children.

After this he consoled himself with more frequent carnivals along with his fellow syces, which gradually degenerated into orgies. I came to learn that my stable was made the scene of these during the late hours of the night and on, it might be, into the small hours of the morning. When it came to this I considered it high time to interfere, for the sake of the safety and comfort of my horses if not for that of respectability; and this intention I had to enforce so decisively in the case at least of one of the erring syces, who was proved to have made attempts at continuance after being warned, that he seemed to cherish a sudden and strong resentment therefrom. Indeed, from his look I had a suspicion of some brooding mischief at the time, but which I could not then decipher. A day or two later one of my horses was seized with a sudden and strange illness, quite unlike anything I had ever, in my large experience of horses,

known before. In the morning it appeared ill, and by evening it died, stiffened with cramp all the time. But, ere this, I had no hesitation in ascribing the illness to poison; and on putting two thoughts together I further came to the conclusion that it was the outcome of my dealing with the refractory syce. He was as wily and treacherous-looking an Aryan as one might wish to meet, or rather to avoid; and the malignant look of triumph and mingled indifference which met me when I questioned him was ill concealed. I could obtain, however, little or no satisfaction for the loss, pecuniary or otherwise. The man was probably worth little more than the waist-cloth he stood in, and there was the difficulty of proving that the horse really died of poison, there being no veterinary surgeon thereabout, far or near, to attest the fact. Further, there was the question of proving who administered the poison; even though a little later on I heard, and might have been able to prove, that the suspected individual had been seen buying arsenic in the bazaar the day before the horse died. The superintendent of police, an Englishman, to whom I applied, suggested to me quietly that the only real "remedy" that lay in my hands was to inflict upon the evil-doer a sound corporal castigation and be done with him; and this advice I endeavoured honestly to carry out, though I feel sure that in the end the rascal felt himself nine times the winner. Bhogeráj I never suspected of having had a hand in the matter. He seemed too genuinely sorry for what had happened, and besides, despite his shortcomings, I believed him incapable of such an action.

The next eventful era in Bhogeráj's career occurred a year or so later, at another plantation or "factory" whither, along with me, he had migrated. It was when a neighbouring tenant of the "factory" came to complain that Bhogeráj had enticed and hidden away his—the tenant's—wife or "property" (mall), as, in common with his countrymen, he styled and regarded her. He said that she had even shamelessly deserted her infant child, let alone her affectionate husband and all her household cares and duties, including the preparation of her lord and master's meals, at all which he was very sad and downcast. Bhogeráj, on being summoned, denied the soft impeachment, as regarded at least the enticing away, and affirmed that she had left of her own

accord owing to ill-treatment by her husband. He seemed inclined, too, to deny any knowledge of her whereabouts, or that she had come to him; but on this point being pressed through accumulating proof, he then averred, somewhat ungallantly, that she had come to him of her own free will, and without any arts or blandishments on his part towards that end. He declared that she would have run away in any case, owing to her husband's ill-usage. It was then urged upon him that he must produce the woman, so that the question might, as far as practicable, be cleared up between the three face to face. After some little persuasion he departed reluctantly to bring her. On his returning shortly she appeared in his company, a young and rather good-looking woman of fair complexion, and, like her husband, of the "Bunyah" or meal-dealer caste. And this rather surprised me. I wondered that under the circumstances her husband should make any effort to bring her back, for by openly taking up with a lower caste, or rather non-caste, she had outcasted herself and was therefore inadmissible again into her husband's family, unless with the result of the similar outcasting of them all. I could not, therefore, quite comprehend his motive, and it seemed to puzzle the natives themselves, but presently I saw into it clearer.

The woman on confronting her husband maintained a quiet demeanour, while he exhibited a pitiable aspect of entreaty and appeal. He adjured her to return to her home and household duties; drew a pathetic picture of what would become of the child without her, which he now wanted to place in her arms, but which she made no advance towards receiving. He folded his hands towards her in supplication as he would do towards his Brahmin priest, looked piteously at her, and besought her again and again, in the most pleading tones, to return, but still she made no responsive sign, and I was half beginning to think that she was rather hardened in her course. Then Bhogeráj interposed and said that he—the husband—had ill-used her, and that if he got her back again he would kill her. But certainly I saw little of such a truculent nature in the abject and whining figure before me. Such a piteous display, indeed, did he make of himself that when he found words and entreaties were of no avail, he bent down to kiss the ground at her feet, as the utmost humiliation he

could inflict on himself in order to get her back, though amid the remonstrances and disgust of the natives around. Then, just as I had turned round again after making some enquiry of Bhogerāj or one of those present, I caught the momentary fleeting remnant of a glance cast upon her full of malignant and vindictive meaning. The mask had unexpectedly fallen, and quick though the effort to resume the previous disguise, I had already seen through it. All the grovelling and whining, the man's apparent disregard of caste in order to get his wife back, were now explained. It was simply to take revenge on her, and that doubtless in a diabolical fashion, in keeping with a well-known and too common custom of the country in such cases, as Bhogerāj also suggested.

Our ayah, who was standing near with her young charge in the verandah, must also have caught sight of the glance and have been of the same opinion, for she murmured: "If the man gets her back he'll terribly ill-use her, and won't leave her life." As for the woman herself she must have penetrated the mask all along, for the momentary dropping of it seemed to come to her as no surprise. She only maintained her refusal to return to him. Proof also was accumulating that the man had really, as Bhogerāj stated, used her badly. So, seeing how the wind lay, I merely said that I could not interfere in the matter in any way, nor would countenance force or violence. The man, it may be added, had disseminated the threat the evening before that, sword in hand by night, in company with his friends, he would search all the wheat and barley fields in the neighbourhood for his wife, among which she was supposed to have remained concealed with the connivance of Bhogerāj, and that he would not cease till he found her. The ominous meaning conveyed in that threat was obvious, though I suspected that there was as much bravado in it as anything else. On hearing the above decision, however, and seeing that the need for farther disguise had now ceased, his aspect changed, and a wicked look came over his face. They all went their different ways, however, the "aggrieved husband" with his child in his arms towards his hamlet a couple of hundred yards away, though reluctantly, and casting menacing and vindictive looks at his wife as he retreated; she towards the servants' quarters of my establishment. Tinking that the matter was so far at rest, I was

just about to recline on a sofa for my afternoon siesta, a couple of hours later, when the ayah came into the room with excited looks, saying that the man was at that moment dragging his wife away from the servants' quarters by force, had pulled all her clothing off in the act, regardless of decency and of everything but to get possession of her, and that none of the servants had the courage to interfere between a man and his "property" (wife).

Hurrying out, I saw, indeed, that he was dragging her away as described, and also by the hair of her head. The cowardly creed-and-custom-bound servants, though more or less sympathising with the woman, as I had gathered from their demeanour, were all standing gaping, as the ayah had stated, averse to interfere. Presently the man, catching sight of me hurrying on at my best tropical pace, dropped his prey, and with a look of baffled rage took to his heels, vowing future vengeance against her, as every now and again in his retreat he turned round ere reaching his house to give vent to his threats. I had only come out in time, however, as he had already got her half-way to there, ultimately dragging her along the ground on her stumbling and falling.

The ayah by this time had hurried up with the needed clothing, and then conveyed the woman into safe quarters, while a hint from me to the stalwart bungalow "chowkidār," or watchman—a man of the "thief caste" employed on the principle of "thief to catch thief," and in whose charge I could safely trust my bungalow and all its contents—to keep his eyes open prevented any further risk of a similar occurrence. Had the man, however, been successful in taking the woman to his house, I could not then have so judiciously interfered; while the plan of punishment or revenge he would have adopted would have been the ordinary one for infidelity, suspected or real, as practised by the enlightened Hindoo husband, who constitutes himself at once judge, jury, and executive of the offence. It would have been to bind her hand and foot, then to pass a rope from her bound wrists over a rafter of the roof above so as to raise her up to her tiptoes, and thereupon to brand her body in various places with a hot iron, as indelible marks for her to carry about in memory of her offence. Whether he might accompany or follow up this with various lashings with a bamboo sapling till he left her more dead than alive would, of course,

depend on his humour, and be no uncommon occurrence.

After this I heard no more of the matter for some days. The injured husband was, it was averred, gradually becoming injured, if not reconciled, to his loss. At all events, he appeared to be making no further attempts to regain his wife; while she disappeared again, no one could say where, except presumably that she was somewhere in hiding under Bhogeráj's guardianship. So time passed on till in about a month I heard that he was preparing to give a great feast to his caste-villagers, who had become hostile on account of his conduct, and refused to eat with him, and that for this purpose he had been saving up for some weeks. This, by the way, is the usual mode, namely, through an appeal to the stomach, of appeasing the caste-tribunal or tribal-council which, as a rule, sits in judgement on the graver moral delinquencies of the members of its caste or tribe. In due time the feast came off, which consisted of boiled rice and curdled milk, and about fifty of Bhogeráj's villagers left, with their hearts softened towards him and their benediction on his proposal to marry the helpmate he had now taken up with; which sanction, by the way, he had previously made an understood condition of the feast. He was not, he said, going "to throw away his money for nothing." At this feast it was said that even the forlorn husband was present, as affable as any, and had signified his assent to the new arrangement. He too, probably, was looking about elsewhere to console himself. Thus all ended favourably for Bhogeráj, better, perhaps, than he deserved. He was received back into the fellowship of his caste, and shortly after the feast he married the woman and settled again into the life of a respectable domestic man, according, at least, to the tenets of his caste or tribe. After this, he resumed his evening ditties, with care now uplifted from his mind, except such as in due course attended the increase of his second family with its associated expenses. An extra rupee now and again, however, always sufficed as before to drive away dull care whenever it appeared too visibly to overshadow him; and what between his hookah, his songs, and his social gossip amid his circle of fellow-grooms or other servants around their evening fire—at least, during the cold season—added to an occasional gallon or two of palm-toddy on

bazaar days, he seemed to pass a generally merry and care-absent life. When I left the country a year or two later I felt sorry to part with him, as with some other servants, to whom, with their simple, faithful services, one becomes really attached during a long residence in India, and did my best to make the parting, in a practicable form, as mild to him and to them as possible.

A BREAD-AND-BUTTER MISS.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

WE were all hard at work making rushlight dips. When I say "we," I mean Theodora (myself), Wilhelmina, Hermione, Victoria, Alice, Mary, Jack, and Bob. It will be observed that we elder ones had been treated generously as regards names, our parents having considered, properly enough, that as they could give us very little else it would be a pity to stint us in that particular. But after the fourth girl they grew careless, and took the first names that occurred to them, and were not much trouble to pronounce.

I wonder whether many people know how to make rushlight dips, or have any idea what an engrossing occupation it is, particularly when one is allowed only half an inch of candle to go to bed by. The following is our recipe. First we catch our rushes; that is to say, we make an expedition to the nearest marsh, where at the cost of wet feet and dragged skirts, we secure a bundle of fine fat rushes. Next we melt our candle-ends, the result of many weeks' saving, into a mould made by Bob, the mechanical genius of the family, and into this we dip our rushes. I must candidly admit that our home-made dips were never a very brilliant success. Still, by dint of humouring and coaxing, they could be induced to burn for a little while, and we, their proud manufacturers, thought their fitful illumination superior to gas, or even to electric light.

We were busily engaged in peeling our rushes, and melting the candle-ends into which they were to be dipped, when mother appeared at the school-room door with a letter in her hand.

"Theodora," she said, calling me by my full name for almost the first time in my life, "I want to speak to you for a minute in my room."

There was an ominous solemnity in her tone and manner which made my heart sink, for I fancied that a scolding must be in store for me for some crime of unusual magnitude. I followed our parent from the room, but little consoled by the sympathetic glances of the rest of the family.

"Theo," began mother, as soon as the door closed behind us, "do you remember going to see Cara Broughton three years ago, when I took you to town to have your teeth looked at?"

Considering that I had only once been in town in my life, and that our cousin, Mrs. Broughton, was the only person I had been taken to see except the dentist, I was not likely to have forgotten her. On the contrary, I remembered clearly the beautiful house in Grosvenor Gardens, the imposing-looking servants, the pictures and ornaments in the drawing-room, and, best of all, Mrs. Broughton's liveliness and good-nature.

"When Theo is grown up," she had then said to mother, "you must let her come and stay with me, and I will find her a good husband with at least ten thousand a year."

Whereupon mother had shaken her head, and said that Cousin Cara had not forgotten how to talk nonsense. The little scene came back to me vividly enough at the moment in question.

"Oh, yes," I replied readily. "Of course I remember Cousin Cara. She was very kind, and sent me a box of French sweets the Christmas after we saw her."

"Well, she doesn't appear to have forgotten you either," continued mother. "She has written to ask if I will allow you to go and stay with them at Oaklands, their country place in Norfolk. They are going to have a shooting party, and you are asked for the First."

She paused to note the effect she had produced. Seeing me speechless with astonishment, she proceeded.

"Of course you are not really out, and under other circumstances I should not allow you to be seen until you were presented. However, as there is no chance of that, perhaps the best thing we can do is to get you a few tidy clothes, and start you off to Norfolk, transformed into a grown-up young lady. You wouldn't be bad-looking if you were decently dressed, and I don't think you are altogether devoid of common-sense, or I wouldn't trust you alone in such a very modern country house as Oaklands."

Our parent has no illusions on the subject of her offspring, so I felt myself blushing crimson with pride and gratification at these very modified compliments.

"Of course it is of no use your going if you are likely to be shy and miserable," resumed mother. "You will understand what poverty means after a week spent among a lot of smart people, better than after a lifetime here in Dawmead. At Cara Broughton's you will certainly be the worst-dressed girl of the party, and you will be completely out of it as far as the sayings and doings of society are concerned. Still, you are not likely to have many opportunities of seeing the world, so perhaps it is a pity you should lose this one, unless you think you would be happier at home."

"Oh, mother," I gasped, "if I really may, I should love to go and stay with Cousin Cara!"

"Well, well," she said, smiling, "I have given you your choice. Don't blame me if life in a country house is not all your fancy paints it."

I went back to the school-room, feeling, for the first time in my life, that I was a personage of importance, to whom the doors of society were flung open, whose presence was actually desired at a fashionable country house. I entered the room with a step that had acquired dignity, if not weight.

"Well, what's wrong? Has anything happened? Have you been catching it?" were the questions that greeted me from the group round the table.

"Oh dear, no," I replied, with an assumption of calm indifference. "It was nothing. Only an invitation for me to stay with Mrs. Broughton at her country house in Norfolk. She is going to have a shooting party for the First."

I was gratified to see that my news caused about as great a shock of astonishment to my family as if I had announced that I had been invited to join a lion hunt in the interior of Africa. There was a moment of dead silence, the silence of overwhelming surprise. Then Jack, with the frankness that is seldom attained except by a brother, exclaimed:

"But you won't know how to behave."

I felt that I could afford to treat this remark with pitying contempt, so I contented myself with the invariably effective, if somewhat threadbare, family repartee:

"You shouldn't judge of other people by yourself, Jack."

Then Mina, who comes next to me, and is dreadfully precocious for her sixteen years, recovered her powers of speech.

"Oh, you lucky girl!" she exclaimed. "Won't you feel like a real live heroine with a whole novel to live through! Think of having a shooting party to talk to! Why, you've scarcely ever spoken to any men except clergymen, and they don't count. Fancy meeting real men who smoke cigars, and drink brandy and sodas, and bet, and perhaps"—in awe-struck tones—"even swear!"

"That wouldn't give me any particular gratification," I said, laughing. "Besides, of course they wouldn't swear before me."

"N-no, I suppose not," said Mina half regretfully, "unless they forgot. I wonder whether anybody will make love to you; they always do in books."

"Make love to Theo," put in Bob. "Why, she's nothing but a little girl, and no beauty either. I don't deny you can play tennis decently," he went on, relenting somewhat, "and I have seen worse long-stops. Perhaps if there's some fellow there who thinks more of games than looks or accomplishments, he may let you play with him when he can't get anybody better."

"Thank you, you're very kind," I returned, too well used to the family frankness to feel in the slightest degree ruffled by these remarks. "As it happens, I don't intend to pose as a heroine at all, and I don't expect any adventures worthy of a novel. I mean to enjoy myself if I can, and anyhow I shall have heaps to tell you when I come home."

During the fortnight that elapsed between the arrival of the invitation and my departure for Oaklands, my wardrobe in all its branches formed the principal topic of conversation in the family circle. No wonder the boys grumbled, and said that their holidays were quite spoilt by Theo's clothes. Jack declared that I used to ask for the silk, instead of the milk, at breakfast, and that my tea consisted of bread and buttons; while Bob complained that baby ribbons and beaded fringe were always getting into his holiday task, which should have been an essay on the Thirty Years' War. Yet the average fashionable young woman would assuredly have looked with deep disdain upon the very modest outfit with which I was about to make my entrance into society.

"It is quite hopeless to attempt to be smart," mother had decided with her usual

excellent sense. "The best plan I can think of is that you should appear to be in half-mourning. That, and extreme youth, will account for a good deal of dowdiness. And, after all, nothing is so becoming as black and white."

From what I have said it will be gathered that we were poor, but there are many degrees of poverty, and ours came very near the bottom of the scale. Indeed, on looking back, I often wonder how we managed to cut our coats according to our cloth, and yet preserve decency. As the Honourable Katherine Macwheal, mother had offended all her relations by insisting on marrying father, who was only plain Captain Western of the 150th Rifles, with very little besides his pay, and a V.C., which of course was not much help towards the housekeeping. In spite of narrow means and many children mother very contentedly followed the drum until about five years before the time of which I am writing, when father caught typhoid fever, and died after only a few days' illness.

Mother's family had hitherto sternly ignored her existence, but now a Macwheal uncle came forward and offered to lend her a house in the little village of Dewmead, the chief advantages of which were the cheapness of living and the purity of the air. The offer was accepted, and in Dewmead we had lived happily enough ever since, for the poverty which was the only drawback to our lot sat lightly as yet upon us children. As for mother, she was one of those unconscious philosophers who seem incapable of worrying either themselves or other people.

The days before my departure passed rapidly away, thanks to the amount of stitching and contriving that had to be accomplished. As the time for my departure drew near, I became conscious of a certain feeling of anxiety as to what might be awaiting me in the strange unknown world I was about to enter. After all, there might be something in Jack's fraternal remark, "You won't know how to behave." Perhaps Bob, too, had been a true prophet when he asserted that my only claim to attention would lie in my skill at tennis.

I was not allowed to set forth upon my travels without some valuable advice as well as a very limited trousseau.

"Try and cultivate a thick skin and a sense of humour," said mother, as she helped me to pack on the last evening.

"I have kept up my spirits under all sorts of difficulties and disagreeables, thanks to those two most useful properties. Again, hold up your head, and look as if you expected attention, and you will probably get it. My old dancing mistress used to say that all girls look much the same in a ball-room, but that the one who carries her head the best is picked out as the belle. Don't be too much ashamed of your shabby clothes. Remember that youth is the finest of all frocks, and the only one that never goes out of fashion. Lastly, don't let any of your new friends spoil you, or fill your head with nonsense, but enjoy yourself as much as you can, and come home the same honest, sensible little girl you go away."

The next morning witnessed my departure in solitary state for the new world that awaited me in that far-away country house. Each member of the family solemnly presented me with a parting gift. Even seven-year-old May had spent the sixpence that represented her whole fortune upon a would-be tortoiseshell hairpin of colouring more curious than natural. Bob's present of a box of birds' eggs, collected by himself, was rather difficult to pack safely, but I did not like to hurt his feelings by leaving it at home.

A long, wearisome journey to Hornby Junction, the nearest station to Oaklands, and then a three-mile drive behind a pair of fast-trotting cobs, brought me to my destination, a large white house, approached by a splendid avenue of wide-spreading oaks. The venerable-looking butler who received me, informed me in sad, confidential tones that tea was served on the terrace, where Mrs. Broughton awaited me. Then he spirited me softly across a great hall, and out on to a broad, sunny terrace, where a little group was seated round a remarkably well-laden tea-table. A stout, vivacious-looking little woman, whom I recognised as Cousin Cara, sprang up and came towards me with outstretched hands, and an expansive greeting that quite won my heart.

"Here you are at last," she exclaimed. "You must be half-dead after your long journey. How you have grown; I should never have known you again! Will you have tea or coffee? Oh, I mustn't forget the introductions: Lady Downham, Mrs. Wynscott, Lord Regie Gayford. They all know who you are, because I have been telling them you were coming, and all about you."

As she paused to take breath, I looked round upon my new acquaintances. Lady Downham was reclining at great length in an easy-chair—length, indeed, was the most striking part of her appearance. She was not only long-limbed, but her nose and upper lip were long, and so were the limp fingers that she gave me to shake. The only thing about her that did not appear to be long was her tongue, for she bestowed not a single word upon me.

Mrs. Wynscott, on the other hand, struck me as the loveliest creature I had ever beheld; indeed, I scarcely dared look at her for fear of showing my admiration too plainly. Her dusky golden hair was arranged in little baby curls, which harmonised admirably with the innocence of her wide-open blue eyes. A mouth of the order of Cupid's bow, a peach-like bloom, and a small Grecian nose, completed a picture the only defect of which was the reminiscence it aroused of the beautiful ladies whose portraits adorn the lids of bonbon-boxes. This vision of loveliness bestowed on me a smile that displayed a set of irreproachable teeth, and murmured in sweet, monotonous tones:

"You must be so tired! Travelling is such a bore, isn't it? I do hate travelling, don't you?"

"I have travelled so little," I replied. "This is the longest journey I have ever taken. I got tired of being alone; but I think I should enjoy travelling if I had some one nice with me."

"Ah, but think of the difficulty of finding the some one nice," put in Lord Regie. "I am always searching for that some one nice, but when I find her it does not follow that she will travel with me."

I turned and looked at the speaker. He was rather short and plump, with nothing distinctive about him except a pair of twinkling eyes behind aggressive eye-glasses, and a partly-twisted moustache.

"But there are always relations," I said in answer to his remark.

This innocent observation seemed to cause a good deal of amusement to the rest of the party.

"Yes, that is a melancholy fact," said Lord Regie, with a deep sigh. "There are always relations; but, thank Heaven, one is not obliged to travel with them. Who ever numbered a really nice person among his nearest and dearest?"

"Now don't talk disrespectfully of

relations before Miss Western," put in Cousin Cara. "She is rich in those doubtful blessings. By the way, how are all the children?" she added. "I am ashamed to say I can't remember their names or ages."

"Mina and Vic and Alice are quite well, thank you," I returned promptly. "Hermione and May have got colds. Jack and Bob are going back to school to-morrow."

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear such a good account," murmured my hostess, looking rather overwhelmed, while Lord Regie's eye-glasses fell off his nose into the teatray. "Now do have some cake; I dare say you have starved all day."

"Oh, no, I haven't," I replied, as I helped myself to a large hunch of cake. "I had some sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs with me, and I got two Bath buns and a glass of milk at Liverpool Street, but of course I am hungry again now."

There was a short pause after I had uttered this speech, during which the rest of the party appeared to be regarding me with a kind of envious admiration.

"How perfectly exquisite!" sighed Lord Regie, as he readjusted his glasses. "Do you know I can remember the time when I too was attached to Bath buns! No emotion in after life can ever equal that early passion. What a misfortune it is that we can't always remain faithful to buns and other simple but satisfying pleasures!"

"I think eating is such a bore, don't you?" drawled Mrs. Wyncott. "At least, when you ain't hungry. And we never have time to get hungry; we're always at it."

"I intend to try starving you all some day," remarked Mrs. Broughton. "It will be a new sensation for you. Now, Theo, if you've quite finished, I'll take you to your room. I dare say you will like to rest a little while before dressing for dinner."

She led the way into the house, up a broad staircase, and through long corridors till at length we reached a little pink and white room which seemed to me the very perfection of prettiness and comfort.

"Now you will have plenty of time to rest," said Cousin Cara. "We don't dine till eight. My maid Simpson shall unpack for you and do your hair. How you have improved since I last saw you!" she added. "But you were at the awkward age then. Now the ugly duckling has turned into something very like a swan."

"Only an egret, I'm afraid," I said, glancing at my reflection in the glass. "I'm sure I look dingy enough at this moment."

Mrs. Broughton herself was not a bit altered, I thought, and I informed her of the fact, at which she seemed quite unaccountably pleased.

"I shall have time to tell you a little about the people here," she observed, "so that you may not feel hopelessly at sea among them. To begin with, then, there are the Downhams. She goes in for dress and very young men. She won't take any notice of you; in fact, she very seldom talks at all, except *tête-à-tête*, and then only to one of her pet boys. Sir John you must beware of; he ought to be labelled dangerous."

"Why?" I asked, in some trepidation. "What does he do?"

"Well, he is a hardened middle-aged flirt; the worst sort, as perhaps you don't know. He is sure to be very nice to you; you are just the kind of girl he likes. But don't let yourself be beguiled by him. Then I have been lucky in getting the beautiful Mrs. Wyncott. You know she was the belle of last season. She has no mind, only manners, but as long as her looks last she will be a celebrity. Her brother, young Alan Beauchamp, is here too. He is first favourite with Lady Downham just now."

"And where is Mr. Wyncott?" I asked.

"Oh, he is shooting big game in Africa; he generally is. Well, then there's Lord Regie Gayford. He is an artist, and has a wonderful talent for painting horses. I have given him a commission for a portrait of my mare Delicia. Lastly we have Serano, the new society tenor. You mustn't mind anything he says or does; he has been frightfully spoilt, and poses as a character."

"Is he an Italian?" I asked.

"Oh, no, chiefly Irish, I fancy," she answered carelessly. "But he speaks with a foreign accent when he doesn't forget. You see nowadays one must have somebody of that sort who doesn't mind playing the fool, or we should bore one another to death. And now, my dear child," she continued in more serious tones, "I must confess that at present I have absolutely no one for you. I asked two or three unattached men, but they were none of them able to come, except Mr. Colthurst, who arrives to-morrow, but unfortunately

he never speaks to a girl if he can help it."

"Oh, please don't think about me, Cousin Cara," I said. "Everything will be so new and strange to me that there is no fear of my being dull."

"Then you will be very unlike most of my guests," said Cara, laughing. "Now I will leave you to dress. Don't put on your best frock; we have only our parson, Mr. Johnson, coming to-night, and if we all appeared in our night-gowns he would be none the wiser. He would only admire the unaffected simplicity of our attire."

I was left alone for the next half-hour, my mind in a whirl with the new and varied information I had just received. I felt already as though I were separated by an immeasurable distance from my old life, with its commonplace interests and childish pleasures. At length Simpson appeared with a spray of flowers and the announcement that she had come to do my hair. From what I had heard and read of fashionable ladies'-maids, I had feared that she might prove sour and disdainful, especially when she perceived the very limited extent of my wardrobe. But I was agreeably surprised to find her a person of amiable and condescending manners, who seemed to take an artistic interest in myself as a new and promising subject for the exercise of her talents. She was pleased to express her approval of my hair, and preserved a discreet silence on the subject of my country-made black grenadine.

When my toilet was complete, I had some difficulty in recognising myself in the tall, slender girl, with bare neck and arms, and elaborately-dressed hair, whose eyes, half pleased, half scared, looked back at me out of the long mirror. Scarcely had I made acquaintance with this strange new self than Cara made her appearance, radiant in a tea-gown of many-hued brocade.

"Bless the child, how nice she looks now she's dressed!" was her first exclamation. "If you could sell the secret of your complexion, my dear, you would make your fortune in a week. I half doubt whether——" she paused, and then went on—"I shan't be able to look after you as much as I ought, perhaps, and a country house is not exactly like a girls' school. However, keep a cool head and a cold heart, and don't believe a word anybody says to you, and you'll get on all right."

When we entered the drawing-room we

found it occupied only by Mr. Broughton and a bald, spectacled gentleman, whom I rightly guessed to be the Rector. Cousin Joe was stout and elderly, with an expression of the most beaming good-humour on his chubby face.

"So this is Miss Theodora, is it?" he exclaimed, shaking me warmly by the hand. "Glad to see you, my dear, glad to see you."

I thought him very kind and pleasant at the time, an opinion I was compelled to change when closer acquaintance had shown me that his "bonhomie" was chiefly manner, and that his predominant characteristic was an overweening spirit of contradiction.

Mrs. Wyncott was the next to make her appearance, an angelic apparition in ivory velvet and silver. She was followed by her brother, Mr. Beauchamp, a smooth-faced, close-cropped youth, with but a faint reflection of his sister's good looks, and by Lord Regie Gayford. I looked up with some interest when the Downhams came in. After the character I had just heard of Sir John, it was natural I should regard him with mingled feelings of curiosity and trepidation. He proved to be a tall, distinguished-looking man, with fine melancholy eyes, and rather an ill-tempered mouth under his long moustache. The tenor, M. Sereno, was the last to make his appearance. There was certainly nothing about his outward man that denoted his profession of society singer. He was a stout, pale young man, with light hair and eyes, and a heavy, clean-shaven face. His prevailing expression seemed to be one of abnormal gravity.

"Oh, yes, I know I am very wicked to be so late," he began, addressing the company generally in a high-pitched, plaintive voice, and with a manner of childish confidence. "But my hand was so shaky this evening, I could not tie my neck-tie. I caught a wandering housemaid and tried to persuade her to do it for me, but she seemed to think it wasn't her place, or wasn't quite proper; I did not clearly understand which. So if I don't look quite as nice as usual to-night, it really is not my fault."

"Never mind," said Cara consolingly. "We won't look at you more than we can help. Ah, there is dinner at last."

Rather to my relief, the Rector was told off to take me in to dinner. The only male beings with whom I had hitherto been brought much in contact were the

clergy. I had played violent games in the company of young curates at school-feasts, and elderly Rectors had condescended to crack small jokes for my benefit at parish tea-parties. Consequently, I stood in no awe of the cloth. With a strong feeling of thankfulness that no more alarming partner had fallen to my lot, I took Mr. Johnson's respectable, unexciting arm, and went in to my first dinner-party.

A first dinner-party! To the *débutante*, fresh from the school-room and its miscellaneous tea, her first dinner-party is no mere entertainment—it is a solemn function to which she looks forward with awe and anxiety rather than with any expectation of pleasure. The array of wine-glasses, to say nothing of spoons and forks, that flanks her plate is enough in itself to quench all frivolous tendencies. If she use one of those forks or spoons for a wrong purpose, she will feel that she has disgraced herself for ever in the eyes of the imposing beings who minister to her wants.

The food itself, though the cook may be a "cordon bleu," affords no gratification to her uneducated palate. Oysters, truffles, and caviare, not one of these so-called delicacies can compare for a moment, in her estimation, with muffins, pound-cake, or strawberry jam. Worst of all, there is the conversation in which she is expected to take her part. A strange man sits on either side of her, with whom, in all probability, she has not an idea in common. Ideas of any kind are a scarce commodity in her undeveloped brain; how should it be otherwise, considering that her reading has been strictly limited to school-room literature, and that her knowledge of the world is nil? It is the fashion to decry the conversational powers of the "young person," but it must be owned that she labours under many and obvious disadvantages.

My first dinner-party proved no exception to the rule I have here laid down; it certainly was far from being a success from the point of view of an entertainment. I was nervous, I was not hungry, thanks perhaps to the excellent tea I had consumed, and I was not amused. Mr. Beauchamp sat on my right, but Lady Downham, who was on his other side, monopolised most of his attention.

My clerical neighbour was the first to open the conversation.

"Are you fond of botany?" he enquired, turning his mild spectacled eyes upon me.

"N-no," I replied absently, wondering why some people put their bread on the right side, and some on the left. "At least, I'm very fond of flowers, but I know nothing about them. I never can remember their long names."

"The flora of Norfolk is particularly interesting," he continued. "I have made a large collection of marsh plants."

"Oh, really," I returned, trying to look impressed, while I was inwardly debating whether it would look very "young" to refuse sherry with my soup, and whether if the wine were once poured out it would be rude to leave it.

Mr. Johnson, feeling, no doubt, that he had done his duty by me for the time being, devoted himself to his dinner, and silence reigned between us for the whole of the soup period. As I grew more at my ease amid my strange surroundings, I awoke to the consciousness that, so far, I had been anything but a social success. With the arrival of the fish I bethought me that I had heard that every man liked talking "shop," and clerical "shop" I flattered myself I thoroughly understood. Accordingly, I put a few leading questions about the parish, which speedily brought down an avalanche of information on my head. The Rector, it appeared, was burdened with two churches, which, he said, was quite as bad as having twins, since it was necessary to provide "double of everything" for them. He also claimed my sympathy in his difficulty with his churchwarden, who had become a Wesleyan Methodist, but who obstinately refused to resign his office. To all this I lent an attentive ear, and was really quite sorry when the signal was given for leaving the dining-room, before the churchwarden incident came to an end.

When we reached the drawing-room, Lady Downham subsided into an easy-chair, and the profound silence that seemed always to distinguish her when in feminine society, while Mrs. Wyncott, who had such pretty manners that one instinctively felt the "twopence extra" had not been grudged in her schooling, said sweetly:

"Now let us three have a nice talk."

This arrangement ended in a discussion between her and Cara of topics of which I knew nothing, and people of whom I had never heard.

As soon as the men came in, Sir John, whom Cara had introduced to me before dinner, made his way round the room to

the corner whither I had retreated, and sank into a chair at my side. After the character I had heard of him I felt just a little nervous, but he did not look very alarming as, fixing his fine eyes upon me, he asked :

"Do you ride, Miss Western ?"

"No," I replied. "At least, I can only ride a donkey."

"Oh, but I call that very clever," he said, smiling. "I remember when I used to try and ride a donkey, I invariably fell off."

"I should like to learn to ride immensely," I remarked. "I am very fond of horses, though I know nothing whatever about them."

"Your cousin is a first-rate horse-woman," he observed, "and always has some good animals in her stable. I know there is a smart-looking cob there; you might have some riding lessons while you are here. I shall be happy to offer myself for the post of instructor. I have a perfect temper, thoroughly understand my business, and want no pay."

"That sounds satisfactory," I returned. "I suppose you can have a good character from your last place."

"You want to know too much," he said, laughing. "Oh, there's that—there's Sereno on the music-stool. I suppose we shall be expected to hold our tongues for the next half-hour."

He made a wry face and relapsed into silence.

M. Sereno, accompanying himself, sang very softly two or three little songs in an unknown language, which I heard afterwards was Norwegian. He had a pretty voice, and his delivery would have been sympathetic, had not its over-simplicity bordered on affectation. By the time the songs came to an end Sir John had disappeared, and the Rector occupied the

vacant chair at my side. The story of the Dissenting Churchwarden was resumed, and with a few excursions into other departments of parochial politics, lasted until the clerical guest took his departure.

Scarcely had the door closed behind him than Sereno, shaking himself like a dog that has just come out of the water, exclaimed :

"Now to prepare the decks for action. Somebody pull out the card-table, and somebody else find the counters. Broughton, can you break me up a fiver ?"

"I think we had better adjourn to the smoking-room," said Cara. "I know you will all be cross and miserable till you get your cigarettes. Theo," she continued, "it is time young people were in bed. I will take you up to your room."

She put her arm through mine and marched me off.

"I'm afraid you've had a dull evening, child," she said kindly. "But you were very good to take charge of the Rector all the evening. He generally comes upon Joey or me, because no one else will be bored with him."

"Oh, but I was quite happy, and very much amused," I assured her.

"Well, don't get up earlier than you like," she went on. "Breakfast is nominally at ten, but no one is ever down, except Joey. Your tea will be brought you at half-past eight, so you won't starve if you are accustomed to very early hours."

Of all the new ideas I had imbibed in the course of the last few hours, the one that startled me most was the fact that any family could habitually breakfast at ten o'clock without bringing down fire from heaven upon their heads. So closely is early rising connected with virtue in the minds of the very young.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Fatherland," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE stall-holders presented a singularly fresh and unworn appearance, considering how much they had undergone, as they gradually put in an appearance at their stalls on the following day, and gathered together in little knots to compare notes as to their sufferings, and here and there to allude incidentally to their takings—which certainly seemed disproportionate to the exertions of which they were the result. The fancy-dress idea on which Mrs. Halse's whole soul had been set in March had been abandoned when Mrs. Halse found a fresh hobby in April; and each lady wore that variety of the fashion of the day which seemed most desirable in her eyes. All the dresses were very "smart," and as their wearers moved about, visiting one another's stalls, exchanging greetings, and inspecting one another's wares with critical eyes, they showed to conspicuous advantage. For, during the first hour at least, the stall-holders and their satellites, male and female—a mere handful of people in the great hall—had the entire place with all its decorations to themselves.

It was the cheap day, however, and as the afternoon wore on the hall gradually filled with that curious class of person which is always craving for any link, however "sham," with the fashionable world, and makes it a point of self-respect to attend all public functions in which "society" chances to be engaged. These far-off votaries of fashion walked about,

looking not at the stalls, but at the ladies in attendance on them, turning away as a rule in stolid silence when invited in mellifluous tones to buy; or perhaps investing a shilling when long search had resulted in the discovery of a twopenny article to be had for that sum, for the sake of making a purchase from one of the leaders of fashion; some of them, with a vague notion that it was fashionable to "know every one," kept up a great show of talk and laughter, and were constantly seeing acquaintances on the other side of the hall—with whom they never by any chance came in contact. But no one spent more than five shillings, and the stall-holders began to find the position pall.

"I call this deadly!" said Mrs. Halse, subsiding into a chair, and looking up pathetically at Julian Romaine, who stood by. Julian should have been in attendance at the stall next but one, where Mrs. Pomeroy and his mother reigned, but Mrs. Halse, in view of the exertions before her, had summoned to her aid about a week before Miss Hilda Newton, and Miss Hilda Newton was looking irresistibly bewitching to-day in a big yellow hat. Her spirits, also, bore the strain of the proceedings better than did those of the other young ladies.

"Suppose we pick out some things—cheap things"—with a little grimace—"and go about among the people and try and sell them," she said now adventurously, looking up into Julian's face, with her pretty black eyes dancing. "I've done it heaps of times at bazaars, and it always goes well. Let us try, Mr. Romaine."

Mr. Romaine was by no means loth, and a few minutes later his mother, whose eyes had been covering Mrs. Halse's stall all the time she tried to persuade into a

purchase a sharp-faced girl, whose sole object was a sufficiently prolonged inspection of Mrs. Romayne's dress to enable her to find out how "that body was made," saw them sally forth together laughing and talking in low, confidential tones. Her lips tightened slightly; the reappearance of Miss Newton had found Mrs. Romayne's dislike to the pretty, opinionated, self-reliant girl as active and apparently unreasoning as it had been on her previous visit.

"What a very good idea!" she said now suavely, turning to Mrs. Pomeroy who sat by, a picture of placid content, and indicating the adventurous pair as they disappeared among the people. "We must try something of the sort, I think. Maud, dear"—Miss Pomeroy had recently become Maud to Mrs. Romayne—"do you see? I really think something might be done in that way."

Miss Pomeroy, who was standing in front of the stall, a charming and apparently quite inanimate figure in white, assented demurely, and Mrs. Romayne, looking round for a man, caught the eye of Loring. He came to her instantly.

"You'll do capitally," she said brightly, and Miss Pomeroy, making no objection to the proceeding, was started forth with Loring, the latter carrying a small stock-in-trade, to emulate Miss Newton and Julian. That stock-in-trade was quite untouched, however, when about a quarter of an hour later they returned to the stall a little hot and discomfited.

"We haven't made a success," said Loring with a rather sardonic smile; "Miss Pomeroy says I'm no good! Now there's that fellow Julian doing a roaring trade!"

Julian and Miss Newton, in point of fact, were at that moment visible returning to Mrs. Halse's stall, evidently in high feather, all their stock sold out. Mrs. Romayne watched Julian counting his gains into Mrs. Halse's hand, saying laughingly to Loring as she did so:

"You are not boy enough for this kind of thing, I'm afraid!" And then Julian, with a final laughing nod, turned away from Mrs. Halse and came hastily towards his mother's stall.

"That's right!" said Mrs. Romayne gaily, ignoring the fact that he had evidently not come to stay. "I was just wanting you, sir, to go round with Miss Pomeroy, if she will kindly go with you, and get rid of some of our odds and ends!"

Julian stopped short and flushed a little.

"I'm awfully sorry!" he said. "I'll come back and do it with pleasure! But I have just promised to go round again with Miss Newton. I came to see if you could give us some change."

His mother supplied his wants smilingly, and he was gone. She had turned away with rather compressed lips when a voice behind her said half hesitatingly, half gushingly, and with a strong German accent:

"We are surely unmistakable! It is—yes, it must be, the much-honoured Mrs. Romayne!"

Mrs. Romayne turned quickly and gazed at the speaker obviously unrecognisingly. Nor did the two figures with whom she was confronted look in the least like acquaintances of hers. They were young women of the plainest and most angular German type, shabbily dressed according to the canons of middle-class German taste.

"She remembers us not, Gretchen!" began the younger of the two. And then a sudden light of recollection broke over Mrs. Romayne. They were two girls who had been training for a musical career at Leipzig, whom it had been the fashion to patronise; they had not developed as had been expected, however, and she had entirely forgotten their existence.

"Fräulein Schmitz!" she said now with distant brightness. "Ah, of course! How stupid of me! How do you do?"

They were very loquacious. Mrs. Romayne had heard all about their careers; all the reasons that had led to their spending a fortnight in London; and was beginning to think that the moment had come for getting rid of them, when, having exhausted themselves in compliments on her appearance, they enquired after Julian.

"Though we have seen Mr. Romayne," said the elder, "since, ah, but much since, we had the pleasure to see his mother. It was in Alexandria in the winter past—we hoped that some concerts there might be possible, but there is so much jealousy and favouritism—it was in Alexandria that we met him. He was travelling in Egypt, he told to us."

"Yes!" said Mrs. Romayne, smothering a yawn. "He was in Egypt——" she stopped suddenly, and her eyes seemed to contract strangely. "Where did you say you saw him?" she said.

"It was in Alexandria! He was there for the day only, and he was to us most

kind. He arrived in the morning early by the same train, and he showed us much until at night he left."

"At Alexandria?"

"Surely! At Alexandria!"

"You must have made a mistake. It was some other place."

Mrs. Romayne's tone was curiously unlike that in which she had conducted the early part of the conversation. It was sharp and direct. Fräulein Schmitz seemed to notice and resent the change.

"But we have not made a mistake, I must assure you!" she said stiffly. "It was at Alexandria. We saw him go away in the train."

There was a moment's pause. Mrs. Romayne was looking straight before her with those strangely contracted eyes; her lips a thin, pale line. The sisters waited a moment, evidently affronted. Then, finding that Mrs. Romayne took no notice whatever of them, they exchanged resentful glances, and the elder spoke.

"We will say good-bye!" she said formally. "It is time that we were going!"

Mrs. Romayne seemed to remember their presence—gradually only. Then she said quickly, and in a voice that sounded as though her throat were dry:

"You are going at once? Right out of the hall at once?"

"At once we are going, yes!" was the reply, and with a stiff inclination of their heads they moved away.

Mrs. Romayne followed the two angular forms with her eyes until they reached the entrance and disappeared. Then she swept a quick glance round the hall. Julian was at the further end deeply absorbed in his proceedings with Miss Newton. The Fräulein Schmitz had evidently been unseen by him.

His mother looked at him for a moment with a strange, fixed gaze, and then she turned her eyes away mechanically, and moved her mouth with a little twitch as though she felt the muscles stiffening and knew that they must not take the lines they would; there was a deadly pallor about her mouth. At that instant Loring came up to her with a witty satirical comment on the scene at which she was apparently gazing, and for the next few minutes she stood there exchanging gay little observations with him, the pallor never altering, her eyes never moving. Then quite suddenly she turned towards him.

"I want some tea!" she said. "Take me to the refreshment place, Mr. Loring!"

Julian was threading his way to where she stood, and though she turned instantly in the direction of the refreshment stall, followed perforce by Loring, she passed close to him. He stopped and said something, but she only nodded to him and went rapidly on.

A great many other stall-holders were recruiting themselves with tea and ices, and they were all more or less in spirits, real or affected, at the approaching prospect of the end of their labours. Mrs. Romayne was instantly hailed as one of a very smart group, and took her place with eager, high-pitched gaiety. She did not go back to her stall, tea being over, but moved about the bazaar with restless vivacity, always with a little party in attendance, laughing and talking. She and Julian were dining with a large party of stall-holders at Mrs. Pomeroy's; they were all to repair thither direct from the bazaar, and Mrs. Romayne took a detachment in her carriage. Only one instant of solitude came to her before the luxurious, hilarious meal; only one instant, when the stream of descending ladies left her behind on an upper landing. In that instant, as if involuntarily and unconsciously to herself, the gaiety fell from her face like a mask, leaving it haggard and ghastly. She put her hand—it was icy cold—up to her head.

"He told me a lie!" she said to herself. "A lie! Oh, my boy!"

She was very bright and witty as she and Julian drove home together, and the greyish whiteness which was stealing over her face was unnoticed by her son's careless eyes even when they stood in the well-lighted hall.

"Are you going straight up, mother?" he said. "If so, I'll say good night. I want a cigar."

She paused a moment and looked at him with that indescribable tenderness which haunted her eyes at times as they rested on him, intensified a thousandfold.

"I'll come and sit with you for a little while if you will have me," she said.

She tried evidently for her usual artificial manner of expressing affection for him, and succeeded inasmuch as Julian noticed nothing beyond. But beneath the surface there was something not wholly to be suppressed—something which looked out of her eyes, trembled in her voice,

lingered in her touch as she laid her hand on his arm; something which, taken in conjunction with the shreds of affectation with which she strove to cover it, and the boy's profound unconsciousness, was as pathetic as it was beautiful and strange.

She drew him into his own little room, and then with a forced laugh at herself she pushed him gently into a chair, and insisted on waiting upon him—bringing him cigar, matches, ash-tray—anything she could think of to add to his comfort, laughing all the time at him and at herself, and hugging those shreds of affectation close. But there was that about her, if there had been any one to see and understand, which made her one with all the many mothers since the world began who, with their hearts aching and bleeding with impotent pity and love, have tried to find some outlet for their yearning in the strange instinct for service which goes always hand in hand with mother's love as with no other love on earth.

She lit his match at last, and then knelt down beside his chair.

"My dearest," she said, "my dearest, you shall have that two hundred—tomorrow if you like! You did not think me vexed about it, did you? You know I only want you to be happy, Julian, don't you?"

Julian laid down his cigar with a merry laugh. "I should be a fool if I didn't!" he answered, patting her hand with boyish affection. "It's awfully good of you, dear, and I'm frightfully grateful. I won't make such a fool of myself again."

Mrs. Romaine put up her hand quickly. "Don't promise, Julian!" she said in a strange breathless way, "you might—you might forget, you know, and then perhaps you wouldn't like to tell me! And I want to know! I always want to know!" She stopped abruptly, an almost agonised appeal in her eyes, and Julian laughed again.

"You shall know!" he said lightly. "But it won't happen again, really." He paused a moment and then said:

"You're going to write to Falconer, I suppose? You wouldn't like to do it to-night, dear, would you? He would get the letter in better time if it was posted the first thing. You could do it at my table there!"

Mrs. Romaine rose slowly to her feet without speaking. Julian did not see her face.

"Yes!" she said at last, and her voice

sounded rather hollow and far away, "I will do it to-night if you like." She bent down and kissed him. "Good-night!" she said.

"Won't you write here?" said Julian in some surprise.

"No, I'll go upstairs!" she answered, and went out of the room.

She went upstairs, moving slowly and heavily, straight to her dainty little writing-table, and sat down, drawing out a sheet of paper. She wrote the conventional words of address to Dennis Falconer and then she stopped suddenly and lifted her face. It was ghastly. The eyes, sunken and dim, seemed to be confronting the very irony of fate.

NAPLES AND THE NEAPOLITANS.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

ON my first day in Naples I was strolling at random up a fine broad road which seemed likely to lead me to a hill whence I could have a spacious view of Vesuvius, the Bay, and the city, when I heard a riot of whip-cracking behind me. There was nothing, of course, so very novel about that. But, at least to me, there was novelty about the vehicle whence the noise proceeded. It was a gilded coach, with glass panels, florid wood-carving for decoration, and long-tailed horses. Within was a coffin, with a magnificent pall of purple velvet embroidered with gold; and leaning against the coffin, squatted upon their hams, were two men with short terracotta pipes between their teeth. They sang merrily while their comrade whipped up the horses.

It was a Neapolitan funeral of the ordinary kind. The friends of the deceased had handed the body over to the undertakers or burial society who manage interments, and they had no more concern with their late departed brother or sister than if the corpse had been that of a dog.

I dare say before the dead person was quite dead, the friends and relatives present in the house had all left him to himself. Not that they felt indifferent whether he lived or died, but they have so strong a distaste for the mere thought of death that, rather than behold his sufferings, or distress themselves with the idea that by-and-by they shall be like him, they prefer to abandon him with what we should regard as heartlessness of the most brutal kind.

They need a little understanding, these Neapolitans. When I had lived with them for a month, I felt that I had but just begun rightly to differentiate them. Their character may seem to be frivolous to the core. Yet there is a profundity in them not easily to be plumbed even by the priests to whom they make a pretence of confessing all their misdeeds. The priest absolves them from sins they have not committed; and they, with their frolicsome imaginations, flatter themselves they have thus obtained forgiveness for those other more heinous sins which they had in their memory while they lied at the confessional.

One is not prone at first to think that much iniquity can underlie such a genial exterior as theirs. It is so charming to be accosted by them, with their sunny smiles and open countenances. They look as free from guile, or even the power of evil-doing, as the placid blue water of the Bay when Capri is seen on guard clear to the white houses of its uplands. But touch a spring, and how they are transformed! Then they curse and glare, and gnash the teeth, and gesticulate with a swaying of the body which tells of the fiendish riot of the sudden passion within them; and perhaps in a moment there is a knife out, and with a quick flash it is sped to some one's heart.

Or the fury may lull as astonishingly as it began; and an hour later you may find the rager on his knees in the little church of the Virgin in Santa Lucia, imploring Heaven and the Madonna to forgive him his sins. There is a ghastly plaster cast of men and women with red flames to their waists set upon the altar before which he kneels. Somehow it soothes him. Anon, with a good-humoured word or two, the priest bids him begone to his home with a clear conscience. He may or he may not have killed the man he stabbed. The police may or may not be able to catch him. "The poor people," says the priest, "cannot help sinning. We must not be too hard on them."

The Neapolitan wife is not terrified out of her wits by frenzies of this kind in her husband. Quite the contrary. She would think him but a pitiful fellow if he were always calm as a philosopher. She herself is not generally lamblike. And when her good man has worked himself into such a state that he is almost incapable of action of any kind, she merely

puts him to bed with fond phrases, and sends for the barber to relieve him of an ounce or two of blood.

I suppose no people living have a more thorough faith in luck, good or ill, than the Neapolitans. It is because of their credulity and their dispositions. They wear medals and charms of different kinds, some to win good fortune, and others to keep evil fortune at a distance. If you tread on a Neapolitan's toe in the street, possibly you will see his hand uplift itself with two of the fingers extended. This is to guard against "jettatura," or bewitchment, of which you may chance to be the agent, consciously or not.

Yet, in spite of their manifold precautions against evil, these denizens of fair Naples are probably the most easy-going, happy-go-lucky people on the face of the earth.

It will be remembered that in 1883 there was a great earthquake in Ischia, an island in the Bay of Naples. Thousands of people were killed and hurt, some buried alive for days. Well, the Neapolitans were very generous in sending aid to Ischia. But they were also extremely brisk in referring to a certain little book of numbers with which they are a great deal more intimate than with anything else in the shape of literature.

This little book is a curious nonsensical piece of work—a string of common and abstract nouns, adjectives, etc., with numbers attached to them: such words, for example, as "king," "queen," "bread," "war," "famine," "husband," "joy," "cat," "dog," etc. It is the lottery-mongers' vademecum.

When, therefore, the calamity of Ischia was heard of, the Neapolitans immediately turned up the word "earthquake" in the precious little book. This was the foundation number of the series of three, which constitutes a "terno." To complete the series, some chose one word, some another, more or less apposite to the occasion—such as the day of the week and the day of the month, or the number corresponding to "death" and "island." The odd thing was that when Saturday arrived, a "terno" came out that actually brought a good deal of money into various Neapolitan homes.

I have been told that "glad," or "joy," and "stone," with the addition of the number corresponding to our great statesman's age when he was staying in Naples two or three years ago, was a good investment for those who tried it.

Naples is a city of gamblers. On Sunday afternoons, in certain parts of it, you may find yourself in a sort of Rag Fair, with ramshackle tables set up for roulette. I have often been diverted by watching the throng at these tables. The stake is but a halfpenny a turn. Yet the eager concentration on the faces of the crowd tells of the passion they feel for the sport. The proprietor of the table is the only cool man among them. His winnings are not trivial. I have marvelled that people so shrewd as the Neapolitans have put up with the manifestly defective poise and shady management of these little "hells."

So, too, the famous show of Punch and Judy, which flourishes here as nowhere else, is used chiefly as a pretext for "little gambles." You do not perceive at first that this is so. You are fascinated by the comic inanities of Master Punch. Every one is grinning immoderately—including the stately civic guard in his Sunday plumes, and with all his buttons burnished like mirrors—including, too, the bare-footed friar, who, poor fellow, since the disestablishment of the monasteries, has lived penuriously by begging his way through the world—and including yourself, if you are not past laughter.

Anon, there is a pause. The moving spirit of Mr. Punch comes from beneath his curtain, with a bag in his hand. The bag contains numbered beans or balls. You pay your penny or halfpenny and take a bean or a ball. Then there is a drawing, and perhaps you win twopence or threepence, though it is conceivable that you win nothing. Then Mr. Punch begins to squeak afresh, and other spectators show their white teeth at him and laugh till they choke from over-exertion and the dust that is sure to be whirling about their heads in the breezy spring of the year.

With such persistent devotion to speculation, you would suppose that the Neapolitans meet with sufficient reward to encourage them to continue spending the weekly "lira" or two on the lottery slip which they can buy in any street of the city. In fact, however, I imagine that it would be difficult to find a more impoverished set of beings than these light-hearted, impulsive inhabitants of a lovely city, to whom the word "luck" is as the guiding, or rather the misleading, star of their lives. They are excellent workmen when they can persuade themselves to work. The

average Neapolitan's intelligence is almost phenomenal, but he does not focus it upon the best aims and objects.

I verily believe that if Vesuvius were to break forth with an eruption even worse than that which buried Pompeii two thousand years ago, the first idea of a multitude of Neapolitans would be to rush to the lottery office and try their fortune with "volcano," "explosion," and "ruin." Nor would they be convinced of their folly until they had Vesuvian dust and ashes up to their chins.

This refers mainly, of course, to the common Neapolitan who has lived all his life in Naples. The upper classes are much less credulous; nor would they, as a rule, think of recurring to the Church for any advice or consolation they might need. Yet they too are, or seem to be, a race apart from human beings elsewhere. They have a moral code of their own, which is none of the best, and they differ from northern Italians in their extraordinary vivacity, excitability, and early physical development.

One looks in vain, as a rule, for great beauty among the unmarried Neapolitan ladies. Their features are apt to be heavy, with a suggestion of alarming ponderosity by-and-by. But they win regard by their animation and a sort of general sympathy of demeanour which is not exactly a characteristic of our English girls. It is as if their hearts were almost too large for their bodies.

Generosity is, indeed, one of the best traits in the Neapolitan character. The rich man is not unapproachable because of his wealth. He is on familiar speaking terms with his inferiors, and is ever ready to put his hand in his pocket. The number of charitable institutions in Naples is surprising. There are foundling hospitals for children who enter the world undowered even with a mother's care. Every Sunday one meets gentlemen in the streets of Santa Lucia with badges on their breasts, and holding in their hands big leaves upon which you are invited to deposit a dole for the poor. These are voluntary helpers of impoverished Naples. At death a man may nowhere more easily be buried at the public expense than here. It does not matter so very much to him if he is interred somewhat carelessly in a pit which he shares with many others like himself. Again, if he prefers to give up the life of "lazzarone," which, in spite of its attractions, is rather precarious,

where, except in Naples, would he find a poor-house capable of accommodating about five thousand paupers? This building is one of the marvels of the city.

I used often to walk the streets of Naples with a young Neapolitan friend whose father had suddenly been reduced from wealth to poverty. He was a passionate youth, prone to be at war with the constituted order of society. But one thing he could not, and would not do. Though he had been born in Naples, and was, therefore, presumably quite accustomed to its sights of wretchedness as well as its matchless beauty, he never passed a beggar without either giving him a copper from his scanty store, or tendering a word of sympathy in a tone that was better than many coppers.

It was characteristic of the same young Neapolitan that he would refuse a begging friar with a gesture that was almost ferocious. He had no patience with the Church. The very ardour of his nature led him astray here even as it stimulated him to be foolishly indiscriminate in his almsgiving. He fancied that because the Church in the past was famous—so he would say—for its tyranny and illiberality, it behoved him to requite all the clergy as much as possible with the scorn and contumely he could bestow upon them. He was too impetuous to see that modern Italy has been rather brutal in her treatment of these unfortunate monks, whom she has turned adrift in a world for intercourse with which they have not been trained, and in which they meet with more alights than aids towards a livelihood.

Look how the Neapolitans subscribe money when any special call is made upon them. When Ischia was wrecked by the earthquake, there seemed likely to be no end to the thousands of "lire" which poured in upon the relief committee. Those who had not money gave of what they had; here a bed, or a coat, a packet of macaroni, or the work of their hands gratis. One and all they gave tears, which were perhaps the most precious donation of all. If I were in distress, and in need of consolatory help, I would rather be in Naples than anywhere else. Even the sky seems loth to inconvenience the man whose means will not enable him to sleep under a tiled roof.

But, on the other hand, look how this Ischia subscribed fund was wasted. It is another facet of the many-sided Nea-

politian character. The dispensers of the money were not scrupulous about the distribution of it. They did not feel the responsibility of their situation. It was rather a nuisance, indeed, to be troubled with the necessity of investigating how far this man or that deserved to be helped. So they made their visits to the island as enjoyable for themselves as possible, and got through the routine part of their task as abruptly as they could.

I would a good deal rather trust to the heart of a Neapolitan than to his honour. Some doubt if there is much of what we call "honour" in Naples. But that is far too comprehensive an implication. I would prefer to say that the average Neapolitan lacks moral backbone. He is not wholly to blame for it. His ancestors have bequeathed him this failing, and the Bourbons, who misruled the country for so many years, are also responsible largely for it. How could men be fearless worshippers of truth and honesty when it was only by lying and chicanery that they could make a livelihood, or keep themselves out of State prisons? No doubt, as time goes on, this old characteristic will weaken in them. But it is still pretty strong, and likely to be so for many years yet to come.

The helpless foreigner is bullied, perhaps, nowhere as he—more often "she"—is bullied in Naples. The Camorra is one reason of it, and the inherent lust of illicit gains is another. The Camorra is not so iniquitous a secret society as the Mafia of Sicily; but it works in much the same way. Of old it was "an association of criminals," and had to "control and keep in touch with all the dangerous classes of the city." But it is now merely an organised system of speculation, whereby those who belong to it are enabled to rob those who do not, without proceeding to actual violence.

The visitor is manifestly a very fit prey for these gentle rogues. Take the trip to Capri, for example, which every one makes. An Italian pays five francs for his ticket; a foreigner ten francs. This is not the work of the commonplace Camorra. It is by an arrangement of tariff on the part of the steamship company. The venom of dishonesty has got so deeply impregnated in Naples that commercial men of rank do not think shame of this barefaced imposition. One day I made a stout stand against the fraud. A Neapolitan had just taken his ticket on board and paid but five francs. I, too, tendered five francs,

and the official gave me my ticket. The next moment the captain, who was near, intervened: "The signor is not 'paesano,' (a countryman); he must pay five francs more!"

I laughed at the idea.

"Oh, but it is the law of the company," observed the official hurriedly, with one eye turned in disquiet towards a boat-load of German tourists approaching the steamer.

"And you have the audacity to take five francs from one man and to demand ten francs from the next—on supposition! How do you know," I asked, "that I am not a 'paesano'?"

This was a home thrust, not because I spoke Italian with the fluency of an Italian, but because it compelled the man to justify himself afresh. He would not be guilty of the rudeness to tell me the truth, namely, that my speech betrayed me.

"The Signor's clothes and face," he said at length, "are not Neapolitan."

"And how do you know that the clothes and face of the gentleman who preceded me are Neapolitan?"

Shoulder shrugs answered this.

"You cannot go to Capri if you do not pay the additional five francs."

"Then I will not go to Capri—by steamer."

"That is as the Signor pleases."

"I protest," I began again, as I caught the eye of an Englishman who much relished the scene. But I have no notion what I was going to protest. The captain now drew me aside, not to disturb the German party of five.

"Very well," he whispered, "it shall be as you please to-day."

Then from the new-comers he took fifty francs, where, strictly speaking, only twenty-five were due.

These Germans had already paid six francs to the boatman. The tariff was something under two. But the man made sure of his prey, once he had got them in his little tub. For no other Neapolitan—whether rival waterman, police officer, or captain of the steamer—would interfere with him. The Camorra does not sanction such impoliteness. Rather, it rewards those who tranquilly wink at extortion in such contingencies.

The Camorra is not a secret society of which King Humbert need feel terror. But it does not run well with the execution of the law. It will help a criminal to evade

the law. Yet it may seem itself to be arrogating some of the prerogatives of the law when, in the person of one of its members, it touches the humble gambler in the streets upon the shoulder and demands hush-money of twopence or threepence. Only, however, if the gambler seems to be winning. For the Camorra can claim a percentage of such gains, even as it demands and obtains a fee from those who let rooms and swindle foreigners, whether with coral necklaces, or by exorbitant boat fares. It is, in fact, a mysterious corporation, with its powers largely deputed among the people, so that no one can tell who is and who is not an authorised agent of it.

This much, however, must be said in its credit: it is not, nowadays, a sanguinary society. Now and then one reads in a Neapolitan paper that Signor Lord So-and-so had the misfortune the other night to be attacked in an obscure street, and robbed of his watch and chain, after which he received a stab in the back which may keep his excellency in bed for a week. But such deeds are rare. They hinge as a rule—at least the stabbing does—upon jealousy or sudden outbursts of passion which drive all discretion out of the Neapolitan's soul. The very naiveness of the criminal when he is brought before the judge proves how little these actions are premeditated. I have prowled at dark through Neapolitan lanes of infamy which seemed melodramatic in every corner, but the worst I have suffered is from the casting forth of nauseous rubbish or filth from one of the upper windows of the foul, miry, and coal-black haunt of possible evil deeds.

There are no streets in the world to compare for cheery vivacity with those of Naples. In Canton and elsewhere in China the population is denser; but from all accounts it has nothing of the invigorating stir which makes Neapolitan life so much of a cordial. Pedestrians and carriages are all in a conglomerate, and it amazes me to think how, after two months of the life, I contrived to leave the city without once having my toes run over by the merry madcaps of Neapolitan jarves. Certainly the multitudinous brass balls of the horses are an effectual warning of their approach. But that is only half the battle when you are in a street not more than ten feet wide, with men and women all jostling each other to get along. Through this sort of crowd it is that on the average

the Neapolitan cars have to make their way, and they do it at the trot.

In a few years there will be wonderful reformation in this particular. Already entire streets are being devastated. They are in the hands of the contractors, who have been entrusted with the responsible and tremendous task of eviscerating the fair city. There never was fairer city with fouler slums. You do not mind exploring a little these horrid quarters, now that you know they are not inhabited; that typhus and King Cholera are being summarily dug out of the caves in which they have nested so coolly for hundreds of years; in fact, now that the sanitary engineers have taken them in hand.

They are a fearful compound of ruin upon ruin and the dirt of ages.

But many years will have to go by ere Naples can be so thoroughly transformed as its municipality and King Humbert wish it to be. Twenty millions sterling are already devoted to the work begun in 1889. Fine wide streets are going to supersede the network of alleys and courts, and the houses will be of the modern kind, with proper drains and pure water from the Apennines laid on. Instead of pigging in pestilential holes and corners as they have been wont to do, the poorer Neapolitans will be invited to live in flats. It will be a paralysing change for them.

The tinker who has been accustomed all his life to hammer at his pots and pans while sitting at his doorstep, with the dark, yawning staircase of the cobbler over the way as a close vis-à-vis, and with a variety of nasty smells familiar in his nostrils, will, naturally, at first resent a fifth or sixth floor front, even with an iron balcony into the bargain, whereon he can work while listening to the enlivening murmur of the street far, far below him.

No one can doubt, however, that the change will do wonders for Naples in every way.

I had the good fortune to be present on the day when the King laid the foundation stone of the first of these new streets, amid the dilapidation of the old ones. The enthusiasm was immense. It was, of course, a universal holiday. Every one seemed to regard it as an occasion much like that interesting moment when the family doctor descends from the still room with a contented smile and the laconic announcement that both mother and the child—a boy—are doing well. In the

afternoon the King and Queen were driven to and fro about the city, bowing distractedly to the warm-hearted people. In the evening there was a gala theatrical performance, and the finest show of fireworks that I have ever seen. If the Neapolitan pickpockets are half as clever as one is disposed to fancy they are, they ought to have reaped a magnificent harvest from the good-natured crowds which packed the public places so tightly on this festive night. A moonlight regatta, with more fireworks, was another of the incidents of this celebration of the new birth of a city whose lifetime has already got well into the third millennium.

THE LITERARY PERSONALITY.

THE profession of "letters" has no longer that alluring esoteric character which it may be said to have possessed from the time of the first alphabet until the last decade or so. Its inspired Delphic origin has been blown upon. The public have first picked holes in the veil which kept it apart from other callings, then doubted the celestial source of the light which kindly tradition shed upon what was behind the veil, and finally have torn the veil asunder. Nowadays, thanks to the co-operative principle upon which so much of the world's weekly literature is based and produced, every contributor of an anecdote—whether cribbed or not—to the newer weekly publications, and every writer of a printed letter in the same serials on "Babies" or "Mushrooms," makes claim to be an author, and demands something of that recognition from his friends and relatives which Sir Walter Scott and others have received from the nation. Thus the calling loses its glamour. It comes, moreover, to be regarded as a business lottery, and in no way as concerned with the extraordinary, still less the superhuman.

Perhaps the majority of people welcome this new state of affairs. It is easy if so to justify them. The majority of people earn their daily bread rather by their hands than their heads. They may have been told that it is more dignified to live by the brains than by manual toil. The statement, of course, does not really need to be traversed. The general public, however, is not quick to see this. It resents, and naturally enough, any imputation upon its own ability; and in

and aunts may compassionate you to the last degree for what they are pleased to call the dulness and dryness of your existence. It is pity quite wasted. Little they wot of the writer's recreations in labour. While these excellent persons are feeling sorry for him he is steeped to the crown in vigorous experience, a morsel of which he has taken from his pouch and expanded hugely with the double aid of intense retrospect and fancy.

A strange life, in truth, but abundantly supplied with compensations.

"The man of letters," we are told, "is either a tradesman or an artist." This sounds, perhaps, annoying to the literary man who has never yet been authoritatively termed an artist. But it need not, on reflection, prove an intolerable alight. England is not China. In that distant and stilted land the merchant is held in the lowest imaginable esteem. He is much below the tiller of the fields. To compare a Chinese scribbler of penny novelettes—we will assume there is a demand for such things in China—with a vendor of pigs' feet or agricultural implements were an insult indeed. But we westerns are more enlightened. We know well that our civilisation rests on trade, as the pediment of a Greek temple upon the columns of its façade. It does not, therefore, seem so very dreadful that we should stand—or, more often, sit—in our literary dens offering samples of our brains to publishers and editors with the same cry of "Buy! buy!" that comes from the lips of the butchers and fishmongers of Whitechapel on Saturday night. Is it so heinous an offence—or is it an offence at all against anybody or any principle?—if, having started in the arena of letters with the determination to be artist and nothing else, by-and-by we glide into a mercantile rather than an artistic groove? Is it possible also to be artist and tradesman in one? But in any case it does not matter what a man is called. Epithets do not break bones. Towards the end of his ruffled and particularly artistic life Alfieri expressed the opinion that "a man to have genius must be born a gentleman." This also seems a somewhat hard saying, but you may mitigate its hardness by interpreting it as you please. With it may be bracketed that sapient remark of the old woman to whom Sir Walter Scott once gave half-a-crown:

"Post!" she exclaimed, when she was informed of the degree of her benefactor;

"devil a bit of him, but an honourable gentleman—he gave me half-a-crown!"

But whether he be tradesman or artist, there is a certain course of action which may be recommended to the *littérateur* with the utmost seriousness. In the old days it seems to have been the vogue to treat the author either as a pump or a monster, and otherwise not quite as a rational being. He was expected to drop words of wit or wisdom upon demand, and supposed to be never so happy as when surrounded by a number of earnest, or at least listening, fellow-creatures in the mood—so it seemed—to treat his utterances as inspiration. It is a pitiful picture. Ten to one the audience was badgering the poor author to whom it made pretence of playing the part of devotee. In any case the wretched gentleman could not hope to gain the affections of his kind by such monumentally superior posing; and after all, love is better than cold regard, be this ever so grandiloquently signified.

Therefore, in the name of comfort and good sense, let the latter-day author play the seer and creator only in his own sanctum. It will be infinitely the better for him in every way. Only on this condition will he have a chance of gaining the affection and intimacy of others; and without a knowledge of his fellow-men the hapless writer will be forced to live on his own vitals, which were both indecorous and cannibalistic.

Granted that he be a tradesman, let him take a lesson from other tradesmen. The pork-butcher abroad in the world does not mention pork chops and brawn to every one he meets; nor does the draper talk of ribbons and Welsh flannels as if they were pre-eminently subjects of universal interest at all times. On the contrary, both these tradesmen find great relief in talking of anything in the world except "shop" when they are not actually in the shop.

The literary man is in the same boat. He will, if he recognises the fact, find society much more invigorating than it would otherwise prove. The world at large will appreciate him on these terms as else it would not. Of course, if he is questioned point-blank on professional matters he may not refuse to reply. So in the like case it would be at least impolite of the pork-butcher to decline to answer an enquiry in his wife's drawing-room about the price of ham.

In short, it seems to us that the more

the author is man of the world, the more useful he may be to himself and others. Ideas begot in the cabinet are not much more than half the battle. They must be fitly wrought out, and this is impossible without adequate experience.

OLD MISS PETTIFER.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"ASK Mr. Dadley to come in, Jane," said Miss Pettifer.

The neat little maid-servant tripped out into the neat little hall, and ushered the visitor in. Mr. Dadley was a clergyman. Any one could see that by the cut of his long black coat and the little white bow at his throat. He was a large, heavy man; an ample and a sombre man, with loose, baggy cheeks, and a very bald head.

"I received your letter, Miss Pettifer, and I am here to counsel you, to the best of my humble abilities. To—the—best—of—my—humble—abilities."

He spoke slowly, reflectively, and had a habit of even more slowly repeating the last few words of his sentences, as if he were carefully poising and weighing them and trying to make them balance.

"It is very kind of you to come. I am in great trouble. But won't you sit down, sir?" said Miss Pettifer, with a quaint mingling of reverence and apologetic courtesy, but with no sign of trouble on her hard features, no sound of trouble in her clear, cold voice.

The Reverend Mr. Dadley turned ponderously about, deposited his hat on the table, dropped his black kid gloves into it, and sank down in the cosy, old-fashioned arm-chair with a prolonged sigh. He was such a large man that he made everything in the parlour look smaller than it was. For it was a very small, neat little room, and the furniture harmonised with the smallness of the room, and the size of Miss Pettifer was in harmony with the furniture.

"Duty," said Mr. Dadley, presently, sighing and looking at the ceiling, "duty, my dear friend, is not always pleasant. It is nearly always unpleasant; but, being duty, it must be done. Must—be—done."

"I want you to tell me," said Miss Pettifer calmly, "what my duty is."

"To be sure. To—be—sure," responded Mr. Dadley. "Now, I have thought earnestly over it all, and having known and watched your abandoned nephew,

George Pascoe, from his boyhood upwards, I trust that I am right—I feel that I am right in saying: No; you must not do it. Certainly not. No—certainly—not."

Miss Pettifer looked at him steadily, without speaking, and he continued, with a studied intonation, and a grave earnestness which was really impressive.

"I know all—I have considered all. I know how you loved your younger sister, how true you were to her. Who but yourself said a word in her behalf when, forgetful of her duty to her widowed mother, she ran away from home and married a man unworthy of her? She went her wilful way; her mother died without forgiving her; and when sorrow and death overtake her, to whom does she turn for help, but to you? Your love is still hers; you go to her, find her in abject poverty, deserted by the scoundrel who married her; and you minister to her dying needs. Her one child, a boy of seven, she leaves to your care. And how have you fulfilled your trust? You have kept him, clothed him, schooled him, you have stinted him in nothing. Your love for your sister moves you to do all this and more. You do it all for her sake—for love of her. Not for the boy's sake. Him you never loved."

Miss Pettifer made a movement as if to interrupt him, but checked herself, drooped her head in mute acquiescence, and he went on:

"You did your duty, but you could not love him. How could you? True, he is your sister's child, but he is also the child of the man who darkened your old home, and made your sister's young life miserable. Her death is at his door. You could not love that man's child, but you did all else but love him. With the wilfulness of his mother the boy has the utterly bad heart of his father. How has he repaid you? One may forgive much mischief in a boy, but not such heartless, malicious mischief as was brought home to him so often that his name became a by-word in the town. He did not love you, and did not care what sorrow and shame he brought upon you. On my advice, you sent him away to school. There, young as he was—for he was still only eighteen—he was soon found to be indulging in secret gambling, drinking, and riotous living. He contaminates his schoolfellows, terrible reports come to you here, and over and over again you pay heavy sums to relieve him from debt and degradation;

but at last he falls into such disgrace that he is expelled. He sneaks back to you—the spiritless hound!—with promises of amendment. Promises—of—amendment. What are they worth? In the weeks that followed, how many times did he get money from you—wheedling it out of you, or even robbing you of it if he could not get it otherwise? How many times did he come to your door after midnight senselessly intoxicated? How many times did you forgive him, for your sister's sake? Ah! And now——”

He paused, and spread his hands out expressively.

“Now,” said Miss Pettifer quietly, “it is worse than ever.”

“Worse—than—ever,” repeated Mr. Dadley. “When you persuaded Mr. Grellin, your father's old friend, to give the graceless scoundrel a chance, thinking that if the boy could get free of his old companions here, he might settle down to work in London, under Mr. Grellin's care, and go right yet—what was your resolve? You remember what you told the boy here, in my presence, on the day he left you?”

“I told him,” said Miss Pettifer, “that if he did wrong again he should bear whatever punishment he had earned, that I would not shield him any more, because I felt that it only encouraged him in wrongdoing. I told him that, so long as he lived honourably and well, I would help him in every way I could, but that if he fell into his old bad ways again I would help him no more—I would utterly disown him.”

“Utterly—disown—him,” repeated Mr. Dadley; “yes. And now he has gone from bad to worse. Betrayed his master's trust. Got into difficulty through gambling and loose living, and forged his master's name to a cheque for two hundred pounds. Takes advantage of his master's absence to do it, and hides his crime by falsifying his accounts. Now he is found out, arrested and remanded, and Mr. Grellin rightly communicates with you. You ask me what you should do. You say that for your sister's sake you feel that you ought to pay the money and beg that the thief may be pardoned.”

If it were possible for such hard, unsympathetic features as Miss Pettifer's to soften; if it were possible for such cold, keen, steely eyes ever to be dim with tears; if it were possible for such thin, firm lips to become tremulous, her whole look softened, her eyes grew misty, and her

lips quivered at that moment, for a moment only; then she spoke with no trace of weakness or emotion, as calmly as one at a judicial examination who merely desired that every fact should be laid impartially before the court.

“Yet,” she said, “he is my sister's only child.”

“The more reason,” intoned Mr. Dadley, “why you should be stern towards him when it is for his good. Again and again he has done wrong, and you have saved him from the punishment he merited. He might not have gone so far as he has if he had felt the penalty of his earlier sins. Now, for his sake, for the sake of your dead sister, you must not interfere. You can put your money to better uses. Punishment may do for him what forgiveness has failed to do.

“You are right,” was Miss Pettifer's answer, after a pause, “I feel you are right.”

“It may be hard,” he said, “but the things that are right are always the hardest to do. And nothing is harder, sometimes, than to do nothing. Your duty in this case is to do nothing. To—do—nothing.”

He had risen and taken his hat. As he repeated his closing words, he shook Miss Pettifer ponderously by the hand, and she thanked him as unconcernedly as if they had been discussing some question that affected her no more nearly than it affected him. She followed him into the hall, and opened the front door and let him out herself.

Then she went back to the dull, quiet, neat little parlour, and sat down and went thoughtfully over all he had said.

One thing he had said which haunted her like a reproach, and kept repeating itself in her thoughts and would not be silenced: “You never loved him. You could not love him.”

If she had loved him, and he had known she loved him, he might have grown to love her, and that love would have had a restraining and beneficent influence upon him. As it was, he must have felt all along that nobody loved him, or had any kindly thought of him, or cared much whether he went right or wrong, and so, having no anchorage for the better feelings that were in him, how was it likely he should be other than reckless and careless of everything?

“You never loved him. You could not love him.”

But the great bitterness of it all was

that she had loved him; she loved him even yet, with all the still, deep, unselfish affection she had felt for her dead sister. He was the one thing left for her to love, and she loved him; but he had never known it. She had no knowledge of children, and from the first, believing it to be the first thing needful for his good, she had always treated him with strict severity, ordering his life by line and rule, exacting most prompt and absolute obedience, and visiting his natural boyish errors with rigid punishment, till he grew to fear and avoid her, and practised deceits to save himself from getting into trouble. She could not remember ever to have spoken any word or shown any sign of her love to him. It was not in her nature to do so. She had done everything as if she did it from a sense of duty. She was naturally austere and unemotional, having an exaggerated shyness or sense of shame that kept her from revealing in any way any gentler sentiment she might feel. She was in all things conscientious, exact, matter-of-fact, wholly undemonstrative; and could no more express or reveal the softer side of her nature, than a warm-hearted, impulsive woman, unfettered by long habits of restraint, could conceal any sympathetic feeling that took possession of her.

"You never loved him. You could not love him."

Others thought so; and the boy thought so himself. Had she done wrong in letting him think so? If so, even if it were her duty not to pay the money, she might write and ask Mr. Grellin to forgive him. If she paid the money, it would only confirm the boy in his desperate courses; for he would think that under similar circumstances she would do the same again, to preserve him from disgrace that, in a manner, would reflect upon herself. She had no right to ask Mr. Grellin to forfeit the money; but her father had greatly befriended him, and if he would do it and forgive the boy—who knows, seeing how severer discipline had failed, what effect such magnanimity might have?

But was it her duty to do this? Mr. Dadley said it was not—it would be standing between the criminal and his just punishment. After all, though, Mr. Dadley might be wrong. But no—she thrust the thought from her as something sinful, and not to be entertained without peril. Mr. Dadley knew best; what he said was wrong could not be right.

Her duty. She stifled all the relenting tenderness that was striving to find voice within her, and fixed all her thoughts upon her duty; she must do her duty. She sank into darker, gloomier reveries, brooding and arguing with herself. The day had gone, and twilight darkened about her, and still she was thinking, thinking distracted and bewildered thoughts that made her head ache and her heart ache more and more.

CHAPTER II.

MR. GRELLIN sat waiting in his private room. He had been waiting now some little time, and was getting impatient. He rose from his chair presently and walked restlessly about, muttering to himself, and every now and then taking a letter from his pocket and rereading certain passages, as if to impress them upon his mind.

At last there was a knock at the door, and two men entered. One, a brisk, middle-aged man, the head clerk of a department in Mr. Grellin's establishment; the other a sullen, pallid, unprepossessing young fellow, who hesitated awkwardly just inside the room, and looked down-cast and ill at ease.

"Here is Mr. Pascoe, sir," cried the head clerk. "I have just brought him straight from court. He did not want to come, but——"

"Certainly. That will do, Ward," said Mr. Grellin shortly. "Thank you."

Whereupon the head clerk withdrew, and closed the door.

"Sit down, Pascoe," Mr. Grellin continued, sitting down himself.

Pascoe moved sullenly to the nearest chair, and sat down.

"I did not come to the court this morning," pursued Mr. Grellin, "but you heard what my solicitor said for me?"

Pascoe acquiesced by an inclination of his head.

"That statement will be repeated in the house here. I shall give it out that there has been a mistake, and that you are innocent. Some will have doubts, but you must live them down. I shall not mention the subject after to-day; I want it to be forgotten. You shall go back to your old place and start afresh, and I don't think that you will make me regret my decision. I shall give you another trial. You have had your stumble, and I'm going to give you a chance of picking yourself up again. I believe you'll do it. Come, let us shake hands on it."

Pascoe sat listening with a strange expression of wonderment kindling in every feature of his unattractive face. As Mr. Grellin concluded, and rose and frankly offered him his hand, the poor scamp made an involuntary movement as if he would have risen, but dropped back again and sank with his elbows on his knees, and his face buried in his hands, and burst into tears which perhaps were not altogether maudlin or unmanly.

Next morning he went back to his work in the counting-house, full of gratitude towards the employer who had so forgiven him, and a fervent intention to do his utmost to prove that he was grateful. Such generous kindness, when he had least expected it, and from one upon whom he had no claim, touched and aroused into activity all that was best in his neglected nature; but at the same time, it accentuated the exceeding bitterness he felt towards the hard, unrelenting old aunt who had kept her word and put out no hand to save him in his last extremity. What mere human nature and the ties of natural affection should have led her to do she had left undone, and it had now been done for him out of pity by a comparative stranger. She had no heart; she had never loved him, had always been severe, exacting, unsympathetic, almost cruel to him, and he hated her now more than ever. He gave no thought to his own unworthiness, or blamed himself for the crime that had brought him into trouble, but brooded angrily, bitterly, over his old aunt's stubborn, systematic coldness and neglect; and in his own mind fastened all the blame upon her.

Whether his gratitude to Mr. Grellin would of itself have been sufficient to sustain his resolution to reform is, perhaps, doubtful. Fortunately it was not put to the test. It was strong enough to sustain him for three or four months, and then he found a more powerful incentive and support.

For the first time in his life he found himself really in love, and with one who was worthy of the love of a better man. It is something in his favour to say that he felt this, and despaired. It is something even more in his favour that, instead of yielding to despair, he earnestly determined to fling from him all his old degraded life, like a worn-out garment, and work and strive with all his soul to make himself as worthy of her as such a man as he might hope to become. He

had never before been so humble or so earnest.

He worked conscientiously, industriously, rising higher and higher in Mr. Grellin's estimation, and receiving substantial proofs that his efforts were appreciated. But he was most anxious that some one else should appreciate them; and when, at last, after nearly two years of toiling and waiting, he ventured to tell her of his love, he found that he had won all he had hoped for, all he had worked for.

As soon as he was sure of her love he told her all the story of his wretched life. He told it with such an excess of self-pity that there were times when the tears welled up into his eyes and his voice failed him. He found his gentle hearer full of sympathy, and compassion, and excuse for him. He had been the sufferer. His very crimes were only half his own. He had been wronged and neglected. That harsh, heartless, selfish old Aunt Pettifer was to blame for it all! Yet he must try now to pity her and forgive her, though it was not to be expected that he should ever wish to see her again. Now—he had some one who loved him, he had conquered his own weaknesses and risen above them, and would build a splendid future on his ruined past. All this they said to each other over and over so many times until, to the innocent, trusting, loving heart and imagination of his listener, George was exalted into a very hero.

But, somehow, he never offered to pay back the value of the forged cheque to his employer. It never seemed to occur to him that he ought to do so. That unhappy business presented itself to his mind, when he thought of it at all, as something for which he had been partly to blame, for which he had borne all the shame and suffering, while the one who was really most at fault had borne no shame or suffering at all.

He kept closely at work, lived economically, saved money, and, at length, told Mr. Grellin one day that he intended to marry in the following month, and asked for a fortnight's leave of absence. Mr. Grellin, having no children of his own, had taken a great liking for him when he found he had reformed in earnest, and was at once interested in the change he was about making in his life.

"Have you told your aunt?" he asked, when they had talked it all over together.

"No, sir," replied George.

"Don't you think you should do so?"

"No, I do not, sir," said George. "She took no interest in my affairs when I wanted her to. Now I do not want her to do so."

"I think you are too hard on her, Pascoe. You do not know all. I am sure that she would be glad to make friends with you again."

"I have no wish to see her, or to have anything more to do with her. I am sorry her name has been mentioned."

"I am sorry to hear you say that. Some day you may be sorry you said it," remarked Mr. Grellin quietly. "Under the circumstances, I think that I shall take it upon myself to write to her."

George made no reply, and nothing further was said on the subject, either then or afterwards.

On the day before the wedding, Mr. Grellin took George into his room and handed him a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds, as his wedding present; then shook hands with him warmly, wished him all happiness, and hurried him away, seeming quite shamefaced and uneasy at the thanks he received for his generosity.

"There, there!" he cried. "Don't say anything about it. It's—it's all right. When you come back I have an important proposal to make. Good-bye, good-bye."

When George returned, a fortnight later, he took him again to his room, and, after a long preamble about age and increasing infirmities, offered him a partnership. George was too astonished for a moment to realise his own good fortune, and Mr. Grellin construed his silence into acceptance of the offer.

"My solicitor will arrange all formalities, and prepare the deed," he said. "All you will have to do is to invest a couple of thousand in the business——"

"A couple of thousand!" interrupted George, suddenly aghast.

"Yes," laughed Mr. Grellin. "But I won't half do it. I'll find the money for you—a mere formality—leave that to me."

He would accept no thanks; and grew quite curt and irritable when George insisted upon thanking him. So the whole business was tacitly arranged, and in a very few weeks George was duly installed as junior partner in the firm of Grellin and Pascoe.

Of course the news travelled down into the country, and one day George had a letter from a near neighbour of his aunt's,

a man who in former days had been a great crony of his, and who wrote to congratulate him.

"I don't suppose," continued the writer, referring to Miss Pettifer, "you hear much of the old lady now. She is as bitter as ever; never mentions your name. My wife called to see her the other day, and casually told her of your last good luck, but she showed no interest in it, wouldn't talk about it at all. She evidently hates you like poison, but that won't matter to you now. She gets meaner as she gets older. Sold her house a few months ago, said that she could not afford the expense of keeping it up, and lives now in one little furnished room, where they board and lodge her for next to nothing. She must have got a goodish bit put by, though I'll be bound the Reverend Mr. Dadley—you remember him—has had a big share of it, and means having the rest if he can get it. He stands a good chance, too. She isn't the woman she used to be; she's breaking up, and more under his thumb than ever."

George showed this letter to his wife, and they magnanimously pitied the lonely, miserable, miserly little old lady, and said that it seemed really as if her unnatural harshness to her nephew were coming home to her, and in her old age she was neglected and alone.

Not many months after this George was surprised to receive a letter from the Reverend Mr. Dadley himself. It told him, with that gentleman's habitual prolixity, that his old aunt was very ill, and dying, and wanted to see him.

"No," said George stubbornly. "If she wants to see me at all, it's only because she feels now how badly she treated me. She doesn't care for me, and I don't care for her, and I'm not going to go down there and play the hypocrite and pretend I do."

There was a lofty high-mindedness about this that made him feel proud of himself. But his wife, gentle and womanlike, was inclined to be more forgiving.

"If the poor, unhappy old lady feels now," she said, "how much she wronged and neglected you, her remorse must be dreadful. I know she must be naturally selfish and cold-hearted, or I don't see how she could have helped loving you, dear. But try to forgive her now. At least, go and see her and try to forgive her."

There was something in all this that soothed and flattered him, and he allowed

himself to be so far persuaded, that he promised to speak to Mr. Grellin to-morrow and see what he could do about it.

He mentioned it next morning to Mr. Grellin, and was saying how unwilling he was to go, when his partner interrupted him.

"Go," he said earnestly. "Go at once. If you are too late you will never forgive yourself. Every word you say against her now will rise up and haunt you afterwards. You do not know all. My lips are sealed while she lives, unless she gives me leave to speak. Go, I tell you; go at once."

George was startled by his partner's vehemence, and did not know how to reply. He went away, and hurriedly made some few needful preparations, and had started within an hour; and as the dusk of evening was beginning to fall, he passed along the quaint, quiet, well-remembered streets of the little town, past the prim little house where he had once lived with his aunt, to the humbler house where she was now dying in her one little room. Nay, where she was lying dead.

"She died an hour ago," said the Reverend Mr. Dadley, who met him at the door, "I was with her at the last. Her last words were to ask if you had come."

He felt a momentary pang of self-reproach. He might have come earlier; he almost wished he had. Yet underlying his regret was a vague relief of which he was ashamed; for he had lost faith in himself on the way down; things had occurred to him that he had lost sight of before, and he had begun to doubt whether it was for him to forgive or to ask forgiveness. So strongly did this feeling grow upon him that it snatched aside the mask of self-deceit which had so long hidden his own folly and meanness from himself, and his sense of shame and humiliation almost held him back from going to her at all. It held him back now, and he had not the heart to go into the darkened room and look upon her dead face.

During the next few days, while he was staying in the town, he somewhat recovered his self-satisfaction. He made a compromise with himself and owned that there had been faults on both sides, but told himself that if his aunt had only treated him differently, there would have been no faults at all on his side, or on hers either. He had no cause to love or regret her, and in the course of a couple of days

had got over the shock of her death, and was able to think of other matters.

One thing he must arrange before he went back home, and that was as to Aunt Pettifer's money. He was her only relative, and, unless she had left a will leaving it to some one else, it would all come to him. She might have left it all to Mr. Dadley, probably she had; he had been scheming for it, and had great control over her. Anyway, he would see about that before he went back.

It was a bright, sunshiny afternoon when he followed poor old Aunt Pettifer to her grave; a lonely grave, standing quite apart, against the low wall of the churchyard.

As he was going away, after the last sad rites were over, Mr. Dadley came after him and walked with him back towards the town.

"I am sorry to speak of business matters at such a time," he said, "but I expect you will be returning to London, and no doubt you would like to dispose of any questions concerning your aunt's estate before you go."

"Well, yes," said George, "I think it would be better. Did she leave any will?"

"Yes."

"In whose favour?"

"Well," hesitated Mr. Dadley, "so far as it goes I suppose it is in mine."

"I thought as much," sneered George.

Mr. Dadley flushed up hotly, but restrained himself.

"If you can call at my house this evening I will show you everything. It will be more satisfactory," he said, and turned away without waiting for a reply.

George went back to his hotel in no happy frame of mind. He felt that he had been tricked; Mr. Dadley had tricked him. He had taken advantage of Miss Pettifer's weak, dependent position to defraud her only relative of his rights. The more he thought of it the more ill-used he felt, the more indignant he became; and, at last, when he set out just after dark for Mr. Dadley's house he had fully made up his mind to let that gentleman understand what he thought of him.

He was ushered into the comfortable, well-lighted study, where Mr. Dadley was waiting for him.

"Perhaps, sir," he said, as he seated himself, "you will tell me, shortly, how my aunt has left her affairs."

"There is her will," said Mr. Dadley;

"you will see by that she appoints me sole executor, and leaves everything to me, with a request that I will pay her debts and funeral expenses."

George took the document, which was very brief, and read it, and found it was to the effect Mr. Dadley had stated. He flung it back across the table.

"Very good, sir!" he cried angrily. "I shall contest that document. She would never have signed that except under undue influence. I am her only relative; you know that?"

"Yes," said Mr. Dadley quietly; "but when I tell you that she has not even left enough to pay her few debts and funeral expenses——"

"Then, sir," George hotly interrupted, "I should like to know where it has gone, and who has got it? I have my suspicions, and I will have this matter enquired into and exposed."

"Sir," said Mr. Dadley sternly, rising to his feet and speaking with grave dignity, "that book will tell you all you want to know. She wished me to look at it and satisfy myself about her affairs, and destroy it. But I think it right that you should see it. What she did was done without my knowledge and against my counsel."

George took the book from his hand; it was a bank pass-book; and opening the leaves he glanced over them at random.

"You will find," continued Mr. Dadley, "that that book covers a period of ten years or so; her banking transactions were not numerous. She was a careful, methodical woman, and you will find she has entered against each item to whom it was paid, and for what purpose. And—for—what—purpose."

But George was scarcely listening. Looking down one side of the pages he traced the regular entry of the yearly dividends she received from some investments, and the final entry of rather more than two thousand pounds dated a few months ago, and representing, as a pencil note showed, the purchase-money she had received on the sale of her investments, and her little house in the town. How had all that money gone in so short a time? He turned back to the beginning of the book, and began to glance down the pages on the other side.

There were many entries of small sums with the pencil note "Household" against them. Amongst the early entries was one rather large amount marked "For George's trouble at school," and close after it the

last payment of his school expenses. He turned over and there was a payment of two hundred pounds entered. The date against it was one he had reason to remember, for he was at that time in prison under a charge of forgery. The pencil note against this was simply: "For George." He could not look up, he dared not trust himself to speak, he knew what it meant; it was she who had forgiven him, not Mr. Grellin. He bent his head lower and turned over the pages till another entry caught his attention; it was for a payment of a hundred and fifty pounds, and the pencil note against it was: "My wedding-present to George." There was a mist before his eyes, a great, choking sensation rising in his throat, and his heart was throbbing painfully; but he could not trust himself to glance up even for a moment at the man who was watching him across the table.

He turned the next page and glanced down at the last payment entered in the book. It was for two thousand pounds, and he knew instinctively what was the pencil note against it, though he could hardly see to read it: "For George's partnership."

He sat there, utterly broken down, bewildered, stupefied, blinded by the truth which had shone so suddenly in upon him. Through all his baseness and ingratitude, through all his degradation, all the black misery and shame he had brought upon her and upon himself, she had never for a moment deserted him; she had loved him through it all and uplifted and supported him, and made him all that he was; and he had never known it or suspected it—till now. To think how he had hated her, and spoken evil things and thought worse of her, and to think how she had loved him! Oh, blind, blind! not to have seen it long ago. Not to have seen through the unconquerable self-restraint, and the curse of undemonstrativeness which nature had laid upon her! How altered everything might have been! He had never understood her, never known her until now, when her pained and lonely heart had carried its deep, inarticulate love with it to the grave.

The book had fallen from his hands, the tears were coursing down his cheeks unheeded; he was utterly broken down and overwhelmed.

Mr. Dadley sat and watched him without speaking. He saw how deeply he was moved, and knew that his own sorrow and

remorse would purify and ennoble him, and waken the truer self within him, more than any words of warning or reproach could possibly do. He sat looking on in silence, and when, at last, the young man rose with a dazed and shamefaced air and turned and made his way out of the room without uttering a word or once looking up at him, he neither spoke nor followed him, feeling that his humiliation and repentance were bitter enough already. He heard the street door close, and gave a sigh of relief, for in one sense the interview had been as painful to himself as it had been to his visitor.

The striking of the little clock on his mantelpiece roused him from his reverie. He glanced at his watch and rose hurriedly, for he had to visit a sick friend who lived some little distance outside the town.

It was a clear, moonlit night, with scarcely a breath of wind stirring. He walked briskly along, and had soon left the town behind, and was out on the broad, white highway. The dust was so thick on the ground that his footsteps scarcely made any sound; he could hear the occasional rustle of a bird in the hedgerows, the quick creak of a bat flitting overhead, and as he passed the low wall of the churchyard, he was startled by the faint sound of a stifled sob.

He half hesitated, and, glancing aside, saw in the moonlight a dim figure kneeling over a solitary grave; and there was something like a sob in his own heart as he bowed his head and passed on in silence.

A BREAD-AND-BUTTER MISS.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

As Cara had prophesied, when I entered the dining-room punctually at ten o'clock on the following morning I found it occupied only by Cousin Joe, who greeted me in his most benevolent manner. As, however, he flatly contradicted the few remarks I had the courage to make I was speedily reduced to silence, and he was left to the undisturbed enjoyment of his paper. I was beginning to feel within measurable distance of starvation when Cara appeared, and we sat down to an elaborate meal, during which the other members of the party dropped in one by one, and gave their orders to the servants very much as if they were at an hotel.

As soon as breakfast was over the men, with the exception of Sereno, drove off with dogs and guns, and Cara departed to interview the housekeeper.

"Let us take out some books and work, and sit under the big cedar," said Mrs. Wyncott to me. "It is too fine to stop indoors."

I meekly followed her out into the garden, and past some tempting-looking tennis-courts.

"Don't you play tennis?" I asked my companion, inwardly hoping that she would challenge me to a "single."

"Tennis!" she repeated, looking at me in unfeigned surprise. "Oh dear, no. Why, nothing is so bad for the hands!"

She seemed to think this so conclusive that I said no more on the subject, but reflected that the lot even of a beauty was not without its pains and penalties. Under the cedar a hammock was stretched, into which Mrs. Wyncott gracefully climbed, and then produced an ancient strip of embroidery, that looked as though it had lasted her for "company work" since the year of her debut. Conversation did not flourish between us, which was scarcely to be wondered at, considering that we had about as many ideas and interests in common as the inhabitants of two different planets. It was, therefore, rather a relief when M. Sereno came across the lawn and joined us.

"Wouldn't you like to run away and play?" he began, addressing me with languid impertinence. "We old married people want to talk secrets."

"Are you married, M. Sereno?" asked Mrs. Wyncott. "I never knew that before."

"Well, I believe I was once," replied the tenor carelessly. "I seem to have mislaid my wife, but I dare say she will turn up some day when I am looking after some one else's wife."

There was a short pause, and then Mrs. Wyncott observed:

"How very amusing!"

She had a trick of making this remark in an absolutely expressionless voice after anything would-be funny had been said; and her impassive comment invariably caused the utterer of the saying to look rather foolish. Even Sereno appeared slightly embarrassed, and turned the conversation by pointing out a distant black figure that was wending its way up the drive.

"There's the parson," he exclaimed.

"Miss Western, will you, in the interest of the public, intercept him before he perceives us, take him away to some secluded spot, and continue that very promising flirtation you began last night?"

But I was already on my feet, looking about me for a means of escape. I perceived an opening in a yew-hedge close at hand, and, flying through it, found myself in a large kitchen-garden. To my surprise I nearly ran up against Cara, who was standing in the middle of the path examining some unripe plums with much apparent interest.

"I am hiding from Mr. Johnson," I explained breathlessly.

"So am I," she replied. "You see our butler is a Scotchman with a most inconvenient conscience. He sternly refuses to say 'not at home' as long as I am in the house, so I am obliged to sneak out of the back-door into the kitchen-garden in order to give a semblance of truth to the polite fiction."

"But what can Mr. Johnson want?" I said. "I feel as if I had only just parted from him."

"A subscription, no doubt. He has two of the most insatiable churches I know. No sooner is one restored than the other threatens to fall about our ears. By the time the second is put into good repair, the first is ready for a new organ, or hot-water pipes, or some other little trifle. But come this way, Theo, and I will show you the stables; we shall be quite safe there."

I followed her with alacrity, for I had always heard that her horses were my cousin's pet hobby. We entered an imposing-looking equine palace, and stopped before the door of a loose-box above which the name "Delicia" was inscribed.

"This is the one creature on earth I truly love," remarked Cara, throwing back the cloth, and displaying the gleaming quarters of a dark chestnut mare. "I have tried most of the so-called pleasures of life, but none of them can compare to the delight of sailing across country on the back of an animal like that. There, you see, are the carriage-horses, and further on the ponies I drive myself. But come this way, and I will show you another treasure."

She led me to a box with the name "Quicksilver" over the door. Within stood a beautiful dark-brown cob, who snorted with pleasure at the sight of us,

or rather of the sugar which his mistress produced from her pocket.

"Quicksilver is a whole stud in himself; he is such a delightfully adaptive animal," observed his mistress, as she stroked his soft nose. "He can jump nearly twice his own height, goes in tandem, is an excellent Park hack, and does not object to cutting the grass. Did you ever hear of a more universal genius?"

"Never," I answered with conviction. "I wonder if that is the pony Sir John said I might learn to ride on."

"Oh, is he going to teach you to ride?" asked Cara, with a significant smile. "Well, take care he doesn't teach you something else as well."

By the time we returned to the house luncheon was ready. Lady Downham now made her appearance for the first time in a tailor-built gown. The lady, who looked rather more bored and blasée than usual, enquired of her hostess with a touch of insolence:

"Anything going to happen to-day?"

"Some natives are coming to dance to-night," replied Cara. "Quite a small affair, and over early, I trust. I want to drive over to Uplands this afternoon to enquire for Mrs. Chester. Would any one care for a long drive?"

Lady Downham decided that in view of the dance in the evening, she would prefer to rest in the afternoon. She spoke exactly as though she had been engaged in some arduous occupation during the whole morning. Sereno declared that he should have to begin to dress at four o'clock, as he wanted to curl his front hair; but Mrs. Wynscott, who always seemed willing to do whatever was proposed, said that she should like nothing better than a long drive.

As for me, a drive in anything better than a hay-cart was quite an unusual treat, and I should have keenly enjoyed being whirled along behind Cara's high-stepping cobs, had not my mind been exercised on the subject of my first dance. Would people ask me to dance, I wondered anxiously; would my step go with that of my partners; and, last but not least, would my dress be smart enough?

"Oh, yes, you will do very well," was Cara's reply to my anxious questioning, when she came to my room that evening on her way down to dinner. "No one expects anything of a débutante but a clean white frock. Simpson has done your hair uncommonly well; she really is a

genius in that line, though she will breathe down the back of one's neck. Ah, what wouldn't I give to be seventeen again, with a complexion and a figure!"

In the drawing-room we found a new arrival, who was introduced to me as Mr. Colthurst. He was rather a plain young man, with a long nose, brown eyes, and remarkably good teeth. In feature and expression he reminded me of a nice dog; if he had belonged to the canine race I fancied he would have been a deerhound. However, I did not pay much attention to the new-comer, since I had been assured that he had a positive aversion to girls, and this, I thought, argued a curious want of taste on his part.

Much to my gratification Sir John asked me for the first waltz, and Lord Regie for the second. Directly the Rector arrived he begged for the first square, which I accorded him with all possible willingness. As long as I was not condemned to sit out, it was a matter of comparative indifference to me with whom I danced. I soon discovered that there was not much chance of my playing the part of wall-flower. Cara, who prided herself on making her parties go off well, and her guests enjoy themselves, did not conform to the modern custom of non-introducing, and was very good-natured in bringing up all the young men to me. Then there was always Sir John to fall back upon. He had insisted on filling up several blank spaces in my programme, and I was delighted to discover that this middle-aged gentleman waltzed much more energetically than any of the younger men.

Altogether, my first dance seemed to me a foretaste of paradise. I suppose I showed something of my enjoyment in my face, for coming across Sereno on the stairs after the fourth "extra" he exclaimed in mock anxiety:

"Miss Western, you look so happy, you quite frighten me. Think of the law of compensation, and the miserable old age you are preparing for yourself. At seventy you won't have learnt to play whist, or your hair will have turned green, or something equally dreadful will have happened to you."

"Oh, I don't care what happens when I'm seventy!" I returned disdainfully. "Of course, one couldn't enjoy oneself then, anyhow."

"That shows you haven't been in to supper yet," said the tenor. "When you

do, keep an eye on the dowagers, and scoff no more at the pleasures of seventy."

A good deal of amusement was caused to the rest of the party by the attentions paid me by the Rector, who had solemnly accompanied me through the mazes of several "squares," executing all the figures with the most conscientious care. The next morning at breakfast I had to stand no little chaff on the subject of my clerical admirer.

"Don't laugh about it, Mrs. Broughton," urged Sereno, waxing quite impressive. "It is fatal to laugh at any man to any girl. Even if he's married already, she'll wait till he's a widower, and then marry him and tell him all you said about him, just to spite you."

"I wasn't laughing," said Cara; "I consider Mr. Johnson quite an eligible, and an eligible should always be taken seriously."

"Let me give you a tip, Miss Western," put in Lord Regie. "Tithes are a first charge upon the land, and are paid before rent, as I know by bitter experience."

"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them," concluded Sereno with solemnity.

"I don't think I should like to marry a clergyman," remarked Mrs. Wyncott thoughtfully. "One would always be expected to set a good example, and one would never be able to indulge in a Sunday headache. Of course it would be something to have a husband one could believe in; I suppose clergymen really are to be trusted."

"All men are to be trusted as long as they have no temptation," said Cara, with the air of one stating a profound and incontrovertible truth.

Here we were joined by Sir John, who asked if Cara could spare Quicksilver in the afternoon, as he wanted to give me my first riding-lesson.

"Certainly," was the reply. "All I beg of you is that you won't break my little cousin's neck. Also, bring her back in good time for tea, as Trix Houghton and her fiancé, Captain Ayrton, will arrive about five o'clock."

Directly after lunch Cara carried me off to consider the serious question of a riding costume. An old habit of hers had been hastily "taken in" in all directions by the invaluable Simpson, and a covert-coat was supposed to hide all deficiencies.

"You don't look exactly got up for the Park," remarked Cara, as she handed me a

light hunting-crop "to hold on by." "However, I don't suppose Quicksilver will mind, and as long as you treat Sir John as if he were twenty-five he wouldn't care if you appeared in sackcloth trimmed with ashes."

I descended the stairs, feeling decidedly embarrassed by my strange attire, and rather nervous at the ordeal that lay before me. The sight of Quicksilver champing his bit at the door was not exactly reassuring. He looked so large, and in such excellent spirits, while the saddle appeared both small and slippery.

Of course my first attempt at mounting was a failure, and so was my second, but the third landed me in the saddle very red in the face, and much humiliated at my own stupidity. Sir John was kindness itself.

"Never mind," he said consolingly "I don't suppose Diana herself succeeded in mounting a horse the first time she tried. That sort of thing doesn't come by instinct."

He led the pony to a secluded part of the park where, secure from all critical spectators, I could be put through my paces. The lesson proper was a very short one. After a few hints about holding my reins and rising in my stirrups, my instructor put his arm through Quicksilver's bridle and led him slowly about on the grass, while he proceeded to make himself agreeable to me.

It was impossible to deny that Sir John could be very pleasant when he chose, and I was, naturally, not a little flattered by his attentions. On looking back, I fancy that it was only the fact of his being married, and of what seemed to me a very advanced age, that kept me from losing my heart to my first admirer. On the present occasion he soon passed from indifferent to personal topics. He hinted that he was a lonely, unhappy man, that he had a strong craving for sympathy and affection, but these having always been denied him, he had been obliged to seek distraction in the so-called pleasures and amusements of society. It was rather difficult to know what to say in reply to these confidences, but I could quite believe that to be Lady Downham's husband was no very enviable fate, and perhaps I looked more sympathy than I expressed, for Sir John seemed more than satisfied, and continued to talk about himself and his woes with much apparent enjoyment.

We reached home just in time for tea,

and scarcely had we given Cara an account of our afternoon than Miss Haughton and Captain Ayrton were announced.

The former was a tall, largely-made young woman with round, rosy cheeks, well-opened dark eyes, and a wide, smiling mouth. She came into the room with an aplomb that did infinite credit to her twenty years.

"Dear Mrs. Broughton, how do you do?" she exclaimed, kissing Cara. "It is so delightful to be at Oaklands again. Why, there's Maggie," kissing Mrs. Wynscoott. "Wretch! what mischief are you up to here?" to Sereno, whom I quite expected to see kissed in his turn.

Captain Ayrton, who was a quiet, soldierly-looking man, seemed rather cast into the shade, I thought, by his large and lively fiancée.

"Come, Trix," said Cara, "I want to introduce you to a cousin of mine. You two must be great friends, as you are the only girls here."

"As if that were any reason!" said Miss Haughton, shaking hands, however, with great cordiality. "Enough to make us spit fire at each other all the time."

It was evident that the new-comer, with her high spirits, good humour, and keen enjoyment of life, was a general favourite, and I was not surprised at the silent but very apparent devotion of Captain Ayrton. By bed-time that night I felt as if I had known Trix Haughton all my life, and I willingly accepted her invitation to come into her room and have a good talk while we brushed our hair. In a very short time she learnt my little history, and then she proceeded to enlighten my mind, the innocence of which much amazed her, on the subject of passing events.

"You know," she began, "your cousin Cara, though she is just as sweet as she can be, is behaving awfully badly to you."

"What do you mean?" I asked in surprise.

"Why, of course, it's disgraceful of her to have you here without a single unattached man to meet you, when she knows perfectly well that it is your only chance of seeing any one."

"But I don't want any unattached men," I said. "Besides, I know she asked several, but they were none of them able to come."

"Yes; she asked my brother Tom, but she knew he was in Norway, and she

probably knew the others were somewhere else."

"And then you forget Mr. Colthurst," I went on. "Cara said he was quite an eligible, only he——"

"Only he is not a marrying man; he has always been spoilt by married women who are old enough to know better. I should just think he was an eligible, though; he has one of the finest old places in Westmoreland. But it is no use your setting your affections on him; he fancies every girl he sees wants to marry him for his money. The fact is, Mrs. Broughton is making use of you for her own purposes, and if she had asked an unattached man to meet you, all her plans would have been spoilt."

"Make use of me! Plans! What are you talking about?" I asked in growing amazement.

"That's very easily explained. You must know that Cara Broughton has two great objects in life: first, to have the smartest horses, and secondly, to have the smartest parties in her own set. Now you may not be aware of it, but she has got rather a smart little party down here. The Downhams are quite in the swim, and she is acknowledged to be the best-dressed woman in London. Then Maggie Wynscott was the belle of last season, and Sereno and Lord Regie were two of the most popular artistic celebrities."

"But where do I come in?" I asked, for I had already picked up a little slang.

"You see," continued Trix, "the Downhams make a point of going about together. It looks so respectable, and as they have neither of them much character left, they

are bound to take care of it. Sir John will only stop in a house where there's first-rate shooting and an ingénue to flirt with. Joey provides the shooting, and Cara sent for you to play the ingénue. Alan Beauchamp only goes where Lady Downham goes, and generally manages to drag his sister after him; she adores the spoilt cub. Lord Regie only goes where Maggie goes, so there you have the whole party, with the exception of Sereno, who patronises the houses that can boast the best cooks, and your cousin's chef is quite a distinguished artist. So now you see that you are the link that keeps the most important members of the party together."

"But, indeed, I think you must be mistaken," I urged. "Cara has warned me several times against Sir John; she said he ought to be labelled dangerous."

"Oh, of course she doesn't want you to get into mischief. She probably invited me to act as sheep-dog for you. But you really must be on your guard against that old crocodile, Sir John. I know him well; I had 'passages' with him myself when I first came out. You may take my word for it, it's a mistake to get talked about with a married man of his age. It isn't good enough."

At this novel conclusion to a moral lecture I burst out laughing.

"I don't think you need be alarmed about me," I said, collecting my hairpins preparatory to departure. "I look upon a married man as just the same as a married woman, and should as soon think of losing my heart to one as to the other."

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE jolliest week I've ever had in my life!"

"I wonder how often you've said that before!"

August had come and gone, the greater part of September had followed in its wake, and a ruddy September sun was making the end of the summer glorious. In the large garden of a large country house in Norfolk, everything seen in its wonderful radiance seemed to be even overcharged with colour, if such a thing is possible with nature; it was as though all the beauty of the summer had been intensified and arrested in its maturity into one final glow. The rich green of the smooth lawns, the colours of the autumnal flowers, the tints of the foliage, the very atmosphere, seemed all alike to be pausing for the moment at the most perfect point of radiance. But nature never pauses; and that this was indeed the final glow, the end of her summer beauty, was revealed here and there by little significant touches, or written across earth and sky in broader letters. The birds were gone or going. Even as Julian Romaine spoke a flight of swallows overhead was wheeling and darting hither and thither in preparation for an imminent departure; the very glory of the trees meant decay, and in spite of all the efforts of indefatigable gardeners, dead leaves strewed the trim lawns and gravel paths.

All these signs and tokens of the approach of the inevitable end were particularly conspicuous about the narrow grass path shut in by high yew hedges, up and down which Julian Romaine and Hilda Newton were sauntering together. Fallen leaves were thick upon it, and in the flower-beds, by which it was bordered, the summer flowers, whose day was long since done, had not been replaced by their autumn successors. Apparently, the walk was a secluded and little frequented one, on which it was not worth while to spend much pains. Judging from the coquettish toss of the head, tempered by a certain softness of tone, with which Miss Newton replied to the insinuating regret of Julian's words, it seemed not improbable that those characteristics had something to do with their selection of that particular spot for their stroll. They had been staying in this pleasant country home together for the last week, the hostess having taken a fancy to Mrs. Halse's cousin in town; and now in another hour Julian and his mother would be, on their way home.

As the half-mocking, half-inviting words fell from his companion's lips, Julian turned impetuously towards the pretty, piquant face; it was shaded by a bewitching garden hat.

"I never meant it so much before, on my honour," he said impulsively; adding with a boyish suggestion of tender reproach in his voice: "I should have thought you might have known that. It's awfully hard lines to think it's over."

Miss Newton had a large crimson dahlia in her hand, and she was plucking the petals slowly away and scattering them at her feet.

"Is it?" she said.

"You know it is," he returned ardently,

trying to catch a glimpse of the dark face bent over the crimson flower. "Won't you tell me that you're a little sorry, too? Miss Newton—Hilda——"

His vigorous young hand was just closing over the pretty little fingers that held the dahlia; the dainty little figure was yielding to him nothing loth, it seemed, when from the further end of the grass walk a third voice broke in upon their tête-à-tête, and as they started instinctively apart Mrs. Romaine, accompanied by their hostess, came sauntering towards them.

"Taking a farewell look at the quaint old walk, Julian?" she said with suave carelessness as she drew near them. "The garden is looking too beautiful this morning, isn't it, Miss Newton? What a lovely dahlia that is you were showing Julian!"

She looked smilingly at Miss Newton as she spoke, apparently quite unconscious that the girl's face was quite white—not with embarrassment, disappointment, or emotion, but with sheer angry resentment—and she moved on as she spoke, tacitly compelling Miss Newton to move on at her side, while Julian and the other lady followed, perforce together.

"We have only about ten minutes more, I'm afraid," she said. "I was just taking a last stroll round the place with Mrs. Ponsonby. I'm afraid we shall find London rather unbearable to-night. The call of duty is always so very inconvenient!"

She was leading the way toward the house, and her little high-pitched laugh eliciting only a monosyllabic response from the girl at her side, she resumed what was practically a monologue, carried on with a suavity and ease which was perhaps over-elaborated by just a touch. Her farewells, which followed almost immediately on their arrival at the house, when a little bustle of departure ensued—in which Miss Newton took no part, that young lady having promptly disappeared—were characterised by the same manner, about which there was also a little touch of suppressed excitement. It was not until she and Julian were alone together in a first-class carriage of the London express that her little gay words and laughs ceased, and she let herself sink back in her corner, unfolding a newspaper with a short, hardly audible sigh of relief.

A very alight and indefinable change had come to Mrs. Romaine's face in the course of the last two weeks. It had

been perceptible in her animation, and was still more perceptible in her repose. The lines about her face which had needed special influences to bring them into prominence during that winter were always plainly perceptible now; and they gave her face a very slightly careworn look, which was emphasized by the expression of her eyes and mouth.

The eyes had always a slightly restless look in them in these days; even now, as she read her paper, or appeared to read it, there was no concentration in them; and every now and then they were lifted hastily, almost furtively, over the paper's edge. The mouth was at once weaker and more determined; weaker, inasmuch as it had grown more sensitive, more nervously responsive to the movements of her restless eyes; and more determined, as though with the expression of a constant mental attitude.

There was a good deal of indecision in her face, and its expression varied alighty, but incessantly, as she fixed her eyes anew on the printed words before her after each fleeting glance at the boyish face outlined by the cushions opposite. As it vacillated, the anxiety in it seemed to strengthen to overmastering proportions, dominating all that was more calculating and carefully judging. She laid down her paper at last, with a little deliberate rustle, apparently intended to attract attention, and as she did so her face assumed its ordinary superficial vivacity; an expression which harmonised less well with the rather sharpened features than it had done three months before.

"A good novel, Julian?" she said airily, smothering a yawn as she spoke, and indicating with a little gesture of her head the book in Julian's hand.

Julian had been holding the book in his hand, ever since they left the little Norfolk station from which they had started, but he had scarcely turned a page. His features were composed into an expression of boyish resentment, about which there was that distinct suggestion of sullenness which is the usual outward expression of the hauteur of youth. As his mother spoke he flushed hotly with angry self-consciousness.

"Not particularly," he said, without lifting his eyes.

There was a moment's pause, during which Mrs. Romaine's eyes were fixed upon him with concentration enough in them now, and then she broke into a

light laugh, and leaning suddenly forward laid one of her hands on his.

"Poor old boy!" she said, in a tone half mocking, half sympathising. "It was very hard on you, wasn't it? It's a cruel fate that makes young men so ineligible, and girls so pretty, and throws the two perversely together! If you've any thought to spare from yourself, sir, though, I think you should bestow a little gratitude upon me for my very timely arrival!"

She laughed again, and in her laugh, as in her voice, there was the faintest possible touch of reality, and that reality was anxiety. Then, as Julian twisted his hand from under hers with a gruff and almost inaudible: "I don't see that!" she leant back in her seat again with a smile.

"My dear boy," she said gaily; "it's a very sad position for you, I admit; but for the present you're dependent on your mother—not such a very stingy mother, eh, sir? I think you'll find it will be all right for you, when the right young woman turns up, as no doubt she will some day. Perhaps you'll find that your mother won't abdicate so very ungracefully. But, you see, it must be the right young woman!"

In spite of the laugh in it, there was a ring in the tone in which the words were spoken which was full of significance, and the significance and the laughter seemed to be doing battle together as Mrs. Romaine went on, ignoring Julian's interjection:

"I don't think you would have found it a very pleasant situation, to be engaged to Miss Newton with the prospect before you of keeping her waiting until you had made your fortune at the bar, and I'm sorry to say I don't share your conviction of the moment, that she is the right young woman. She is very pretty, I allow, and a very nice girl, no doubt." Mrs. Romaine's voice grew a little hard as she said the last words. "But she's not at all the sort of girl that I should like you to marry. She has no money, in the first place."

"I have enough for both," said Julian impetuously, and then stopped short and coloured crimson.

His mother broke into a merry laugh.

"No, poor boy!" she said. "I have enough for both! That's just what I want you to remember in your intercourse with pretty girls. After all, you know, the position has its advantages! You may flirt as much as you like while you're known to be dependent on your mother, and no one will take you too seriously."

Julian did not echo her laugh, nor did he make any comment on her words. He sat with his face turned away from her, and a rather strange expression in his eyes—an expression which was at once unformed and mutinous. His mother could not see it, but the outline of his profile apparently disturbed her. The anxiety in her face deepened again, mixed this time with an expression of doubt and self-distrust. As though to emphasize the lightness of her preceding tone, she turned the conversation into a comment on the landscape, and took up her paper again.

The remainder of the journey passed in total silence; and the drive home from the station was silent, too. An arrival in London at the end of September is not a very pleasant proceeding, unless it is approached with considerable industry, determination, and a large stock of energy. The butterflies of society, and, indeed, a large proportion of the bees, have not yet returned. Those who have returned have done so under stern compulsion to begin the winter's work; and there is a general, all-pervading sentiment as of the end of holidays and the beginning of term time.

The day that had been so radiantly lovely in Norfolk had evidently been oppressively hot and airless in town, and the general air of exhaustion and squalor, which such circumstances are apt to produce in London, did not help to render its appearance more attractive.

Number twenty-two, Queen Anne Street, Chelsea, itself seemed to be touched by the general depression. The summer flowers in the window-boxes had been taken away, and their successors were apparently waiting for orders from the mistress of the house, and as Mrs. Romaine and Julian entered the hall, there was that indefinable atmosphere about the house which two months' abandonment to even the best of servants is apt to produce—an atmosphere which is the reverse of cheerful. There were letters lying on the hall-table, one of which Mrs. Romaine handed to Julian with the comment: "From Mr. Allardyce, isn't it, Julian? Will he be ready for you to-morrow?"

Julian's legal studies were, in fact, to begin in earnest on the following day; and when, the next morning, he said good-bye to his mother and set out for the Temple, she followed him to the door with a laughing "Good speed." That, at least, was her ostensible motive, but there was something in her face as she laid her hand on his arm

as he turned away on the doorstep which suggested that the last words she said to him were those that she had really followed him to say.

"What time shall you be back, Julian?"

And as he answered carelessly:

"I can't tell; not till dinner-time, I expect," there came into her eyes a curious shadow of yearning anxiety.

"Take care of yourself, sir!" she said lightly, and went back into the house.

That shadow lived in her eyes all day as she went about giving orders and "putting things to rights," as she said; striving, in fact, with a concealed earnestness which seemed somewhat disproportionate to its object, to give the house that peculiar air of brightness which had been so characteristic of it, and which somehow did not seem so easily to be obtained as formerly.

Her face was gaiety itself, however, when she stood in the drawing-room as the dinner-bell rang, very daintily dressed in a tea-gown which Julian had admired, waiting for her son. A moment elapsed and Julian dashed downstairs, breathless and apologetic, but rather sparing of his words. His first day's work hardly seemed to have dissipated the cloud which had hung about him that morning at breakfast, and as his mother slipped her hand playfully into his arm with a laughing word or two of forgiveness, he turned and led her out of the room without the response which would have been natural to him.

"Have you had a pleasant day?" said Mrs. Romayne lightly, as they sat down to dinner.

"Pretty well," returned Julian, indifferently. He said no more, and Mrs. Romayne, with one of her quick, half-furtive glances at him, began to talk of her own day. She had paid some calls in the afternoon, and had a great deal of news for him as to who had and who had not returned to town, and a great deal of gossip which was both amusing in itself, and rendered more amusing by the piquant animation with which she retailed it. It failed to rouse much interest in Julian, apparently, however, and after a time his mother returned to her original topic—again with a quick, anxious glance at his face.

"Did you find Mr. Allardyce easy to work with?" she enquired, interestedly this time.

"Yes; I suppose so," was the unresponsive response.

"How long did he keep you?"

"I got away at four o'clock."

Something seemed to leap in Mrs. Romayne's eyes—to be instantly suppressed—as she said, with an indifference which any ear keener than Julian's might have detected to be forced:

"Four o'clock! And what have you been doing since then, may I ask? You did not come in till a quarter-past seven."

Perhaps Julian felt the inquisition in the question, though he was conscious of nothing unusual in his mother's voice; for he answered, rather briefly:

"I went to the Garrick with a fellow."

"What fellow?" demanded his mother in the same tone.

Julian moved impatiently.

"There's another fellow reading with Allardyce," he answered. "Griffiths—he took me in."

As though the suppressed impatience of his tone had not escaped her, Mrs. Romayne found herself reminded at this point of something she had heard that afternoon during one of her visits. And she proceeded to place her little piece of news before Julian with every advantage that narration could give it, though her face looked rather thin and sharp as she talked. Dinner was over by this time, and as she finished with a laugh, she rose from her seat, and put her hand on Julian's arm. His face was somewhat bored and dissatisfied, as though his mother's effort for his entertainment entirely failed to compensate him for the merry house-parties of the last month.

"I think I shall have to come and keep you company while you smoke your cigar," she said lightly; adding, with an assumption of a sudden thought on the subject which was not wholly successful: "By-the-bye, the Garrick club must be a most attractive spot if you stayed there from four o'clock till seven!"

Julian took a quick step forward. The movement might have been due to his desire to open the door for her, or it might have been an expression of the irritation of which his face was full.

"I didn't get there at four," he said. "I really don't know what time it was, but it must have been nearly five. And I walked home; so I left somewhere about half-past six."

The irritation was in his voice as well as in his face; and his mother patted him gaily on the shoulder, with her most artificially self-deriding little laugh.

"He's quite annoyed at being asked so many questions!" she exclaimed. "It's a

dreadful nuisance to have such a silly old mother, isn't it? But you haven't told me what Mr. Griffiths is like yet!"

Julian had tried to laugh in answer to her first words; but the sound produced had been almost as greatly wanting in reality as had been the ease of his mother's tone, and he answered now with undisguised impatience.

"Like! Oh, he's like—any other fellow, mother. Nothing particular, one way or the other." He paused a moment, and then added hastily: "I was rather thinking of running down to the club this evening, dear, if you wouldn't mind being alone. I want to hear whether Loring has come back. There's just a chance he might be there, you know."

He had said that morning that there was no likelihood of Loring's returning for another two or three days; but Mrs. Romaine forbore to remind him of that fact. Nor did she allude to the conviction which had turned her suddenly rather pale, that his thoughts of going down to the club had arisen within the last few minutes.

"Very well, dear," she said, smiling up at him. "Go, by all means. Oh, no! I shall be quite happy with a book."

He did not look back at her as he left the room after another word or two, or the expression on her face might have arrested even his youthfully self-centred and pre-occupied attention.

Loring was not at the club, nor was there any information to be obtained there as to his movements. Julian played a game of billiards and lost it through sheer carelessness, and then determined to go home again. He would walk part of the way he said to himself, though he had had one walk that day. He wanted to "think things over."

The phrase was serious, and by comparison with the process to which it was attached, grandiloquent. Julian's mental apparatus was at present as undeveloped as that of a fashionable young man of four-and-twenty may usually be taken to be. The process of "thinking things over," as conducted within his good-looking head, involved no stern process of reasoning, no exhausting system of logical deduction from cause to effect, no carefully-balanced opinions of the past or decisions for the future. When he proposed to himself to "think things over," in short, he simply meant that he should ring a strictly limited number of changes on the fact that, as he

expressed it vaguely to himself, it was "awfully hard lines."

It had taken him some time to come to this conclusion. He had flirted with Miss Hilda Newton very happily for the last ten days, with a great deal of wholly unnecessary assistance from that young lady herself, without the very faintest definite intentions towards her. He had enjoyed it, and she had enjoyed it; and the idea which had occurred to him once or twice, that his mother did not enjoy it, had not particularly affected him. Circumstances alone would have been responsible for the proposal which had so nearly been an accomplished fact on the day before. And had the speech to Miss Newton, interrupted by Mrs. Romaine, reached its legitimate conclusion, and received its inevitable response, it was extremely likely that he might by this time have been the victim of a vague consciousness of having made a mistake. But it had been interrupted; and a deeply-injured sense of having been thwarted was consequently not unnatural in its author. That sense of injury which might have passed away in mere sentiment, but which, on the other hand, might, if it had been left untouched by words, have developed into a secret breach between mother and son, had been focussed and rendered definite and tangible, as it were, by his mother's laughing speeches in the train. It was as he had sat gazing blankly out of window during the last half-hour of their journey, that he had come to the conclusion before mentioned that it was "awfully hard lines."

"It makes a fellow feel such a fool!" he said to himself as morosely as the undeveloped nature of his temperament permitted, as he issued moodily from his club and started in the direction of Piccadilly. "It makes a fellow feel such a confounded fool!" He could not reduce this general principle to detail, but what he really felt was something of the sensation of the child who realises suddenly and for the first time the "pretence" of the fairyland of shadows in which he has been performing prodigies of valour.

All the intercourse with the pretty girls of his "sets" which Julian had hitherto accepted simply and unquestioningly, had suddenly become flat, stale, and unprofitable to him. All illusions had gone from it, and the reality was painfully unsatisfying, and wounding to his self-love. There is all the difference in the world between a vague understanding and a practical

realisation. Julian had known, of course, from the very first that he was dependent on his mother, but he had never felt it until the previous day. He had known that marriage without her consent was practically impossible for him; but the fact had never before been brought home to him. The veto which had descended so impalpably and decisively upon what he was now prepared to characterise as his hopes with regard to Miss Newton, shrivelling them to nothingness, had also shrivelled away all the embellishing haze by which the conditions of his life had been surrounded. In their new distinctness they revealed themselves to him as sufficiently bare and unattractive. The background to all his thoughts on the subject, the background which had grown up almost without consciousness on his own part, with his first humiliated realisation of the facts of the case, and which remained a vague, brooding shadow in his mind, was resentment against his mother; a resentment which, taken in conjunction with the careless and effusive affection of his attitude to her hitherto, threw a curious light on his relations with her. But against this background, and affecting him far more keenly, was a sore sense that life had suddenly lost its savour for him. The charm of flirtation had vanished utterly before his mother's words as to its harmlessness. The privilege which she assigned to him seemed to reduce him to the level of a shadow among substances, to put him at a hopeless disadvantage with all the women of his world, and render his intercourse with them a farce of which both they and he must be perfectly conscious.

"It's all such utter humbug!" he said to himself, that being the nearest definition he could attain of the vague thoughts that were passing through his mind. Then he ceased to express himself, even mentally, and walked along, meditating moodily and discontentedly. He was walking along Piccadilly when he found his thoughts gradually returning to his actual surroundings as though something were drawing them, unconsciously to himself, as extraneous objects which one is not even aware of noticing will sometimes do.

It was about eleven o'clock: not a very pleasant time in Piccadilly; and the pavement was by no means crowded. The first detail to which he awoke was the hilarious demeanour of a young man just in front of him, who was walking, very

unsteadily, in the same direction as himself. He was a young man of the commonest cockney type, obviously in the maudlin stage of intoxication.

As Julian's senses became more fully alive he noticed, a pace or two in front of the young man, the shabbily-dressed figure of a girl. She was walking hurriedly and nervously, and as the young man quickened his uneven steps in response to a sudden quickening of hers, Julian saw that the intoxicated speeches which had first grown into his own meditation were addressed to the girl, and that she was trying in vain to escape from them. It was not a particularly uncommon sight for a London street, and a half-indignant, half-careless glance would naturally have been all the attention Julian would have vouchsafed it. But as the pair preceded him up Piccadilly; the girl shrinking and afraid—afraid to attract attention by too rapid movements—afraid, as her nervous undecided glances around her showed, of the help a protest might attract to her as much as of her pursuer; the man, sodden and brutal, absolutely destitute for the moment of reasoning faculty; Julian found his attention fascinated by them.

A spark of natural youthful chivalry, entirely undeveloped by his life, stirred in him. He quickened his steps, involuntarily apparently, and with no definite intention, for he was just passing them with a quick, undecided glance at the girl when he saw her stop suddenly and shrink back against a neighbouring shop-front. Whether a faint shriek really came from her or not he never knew, but her eyes met his and appealed to him almost as if without the owner's consciousness. The man had laid a hot, drunken hand upon the worn, ungloved fingers.

Julian stopped.

"Let go!" he said peremptorily. His tone was so sharp, and the interference was so sudden and unlooked-for, that the man, stupid with drink, did as he was bidden as if involuntarily. "Be off!" continued Julian in the same tone.

The man stared at him for a minute, and broke into a maudlin laugh, a discordant snatch of a comic song, and staggered on his way, as though the sudden breaking of his chain of ideas had obliterated the girl from his memory.

She was standing, as Julian turned to her, leaning back against the shop-front, shaking from head to foot, but evidently making a violent effort to control herself.

"Thank you, sir," she murmured tremulously, and was moving to go on her way with faltering, trembling footsteps, when Julian stopped her.

"This is not a nice place to be alone in," he said almost involuntarily. "Have you far to go?"

He had looked at her for that moment during which she had stood motionless, with her face outlined against the dark shutter, with a strangely mingled feeling that her face was wonderfully unlike any with which he was acquainted; and yet that he had actually seen it—seen it before, and experienced the same half-startled, half-wondering sensation. It was white now to the very lips, and the great, brown eyes, dark and liquid, looked out from under their soft lashes and beautiful, level eyebrows, wide with terror and distress. Her features were beautifully formed, though they were so thin and worn that it would never have occurred to Julian to class her among the ranks of pretty girls. But the real charm of her face lay about her mouth. It was very strong—though the strength was latent and entirely unconscious; very simple, and very sweet; and even the pallor of her lips and the slight trembling about them could not detract from the beauty of the line they made. Her hair, as Julian noticed, was of a soft black and very luxuriant. She was rather tall, and her shabby jacket concealed and spoilt the outline of her figure; but the set of her well-shaped head was full of instinctive grace.

She paused a moment before she answered him, looking into his face with a simple directness which had a dignity of its own.

"Yes, sir," she said in a low voice, which shook a little in spite of her evident efforts to steady it; "to the Brompton Road."

"But you're not going to walk, are you?" said Julian.

Apparently her glance at his face had satisfied her. She answered him this time without hesitation.

"Yes, sir," she said.

Her voice was very musical and refined. It harmonised better with her face than with her worn, work-girl's dress, and the dignified deference of her manner.

"Then you must let me see you safely part of the way, at any rate," said Julian impulsively.

She hesitated, and looked at him again, and this time the large eyes grew moist with tears.

"It's very silly of me," she said tremulously. "I—I think it was his touching me that upset me so."

She had been rubbing one hand, all this time, mechanically and involuntarily, as it seemed, over the hand on which that drunken touch had fallen.

"I did try to get a 'bus, but they were all full. I couldn't let you take such trouble."

It needed only the unconscious gratitude of those words to convince Julian that it would be no trouble whatever. And he asserted the same with an assumption of authority and masterfulness quite new to him.

It was an hour and a half later when his mother, sitting up, wakeful, in her own room, caught the slight sound made by his latch-key in the door, and noticed a moment's pause before the door was opened. In that pause there had come to Julian one of those sudden flashes of light which sometimes illuminate a vainly-pondered question.

"Of course!" he said to himself, as he shut the door with a bang. "Of course! I knew I'd seen her before! In the thunderstorm, the night I dined with Garstin!"

THE OLD IRISH PARLIAMENT.

THE old Parliament House in Dublin stands where it did, on College Green, its graceful classic columns relieving the dark and heavy façade of the adjacent buildings of Trinity College. Though the Parliament itself ceased to exist with the beginning of the present century, should any of its old Members obtain leave to visit once more these glimpses of the moon, he would find himself fairly well at home in the precincts of the house, while he would not be startled out of his ghostly propriety by any marvellous changes in the general aspect of the Irish metropolis. Like the enchanted palace in the fairy tale, the city seems to have enjoyed a hundred years' trance, troubled, perhaps, now and then by uneasy dreams. Its once fashionable streets, its still dignified squares, are of the grim and rigid, but solid and comfortable, pattern of the eighteenth century; its public buildings of the sober, limited classicism then in vogue. The prints of a hundred years ago depict the city of to-day in its principal features.

The scene is there, all ready to be re-

peopled with actors that once graced the stage. Let us enter the old Parliament House. It is now the Bank of Ireland, and many a provincial English town hall would make it look insignificant if placed beside it. But there is something quietly dignified about it, with its classic portico and Corinthian colonnades. The really charming chamber that once served as the Irish House of Commons remains pretty much as it was, but filled with counters and desks, and echoing to the rattle of coin and the clank of scales and scoops, instead of the inspiring eloquence of a Grattan or a Curran. It is a handsome rotunda, lighted from above and enclosed by a circular arcade which communicated with committee-rooms, coffee-rooms, and every other part of the House. Above the arcade rises a graceful gallery, enclosed with Ionic columns, forming a series of balconies, which formed the ladies' and strangers' gallery of the old House of Commons.

Fill the gallery with the beauty, rank, and fashion of the old Irish kingdom; remove the desks, the money-changers, the ledgers, and replace them with rows upon rows of benches, rising amphitheatrically, and crowded with eager Members of the House, all in full tenue, with powdered heads. The Speaker sits in his canopied chair with all the dignity of the first gentleman of Ireland; in front are the clerks at their table with the gilded rails, where lies the massive gilded mace.

Now a thrill runs through the assemblage; all eyes are turned to the floor of the House; the ladies lean eagerly forward, encircling the whole House with the charm of their presence; fresh arrivals squeeze themselves into the galleries behind; the Speaker's sonorous voice is heard, and in response there steps forward a slight, bowed figure, with a rather wizened face, and dressed in the uniform of a volunteer of '82. It is Henry Grattan, and the House rises at him and drowns his opening words in the enthusiasm of its greeting.

Such a moment was that of the famous declaration by Henry Grattan of the independence of the Irish legislature in 1782, when the Parliament reached its culminating point in power and influence. Among its Members, distinguished for wit and brilliance in debate, was John Philpot Curran, the delight of the Irish Bar; yet singularly mean and sottish-looking, and a sloven among associates distinguished by

their elegant manners and foppish exteriors. But when he opened his lips all this was forgotten, and few ventured to measure wits with him in debate, so keen was his sarcasm, and so ready the retort that covered his adversary with confusion. Yet the great wit, towering in his pride of place, was once brought down by a humble mousing-hawk in the shape of Sir Boyle Roche. In every account of the Irish Parliament Sir Boyle Roche comes in with the persistency of King Charles's head in Mr. Dick's memorial. His "bird" is as well known as the phoenix, and bids fair to share its immortality.

"Sure, Mr. Speaker," said Sir Boyle on the occasion that has made him famous, "how could a man be in two places at once—unless he were a bird?"

But Sir Boyle is not a mere creation of legend. He was a real living man, a fine, bluff, soldier-like old gentleman, holding some post at the Viceroyal Court, sitting for a Government borough, and always voting faithfully for the "Castle." The debate one night was on sinecures, which Curran had indignantly denounced; and twitted by one of the opposite side on some personal inconsistency in the matter, he replied hotly:

"Sir, I am the guardian of my own honour."

To which Sir Boyle neatly rejoined:

"Then the gentleman himself has got a very pretty sinecure."

But while men like Sir Boyle Roche gave a touch of humour to the scene, there was no lack of brilliant speakers and debaters on either side. Henry Flood appears upon the scene, backed by strong popular feeling as a powerful advocate for Parliamentary reform. The old Irish House had three hundred Members, but the greater part of these were returned by small pocket boroughs, and the Government retained a working majority chiefly by the influence of the places and pensions at its disposal. Thus the progress of an independent Member is described in contemporary rhyme:

At first he joined the patriot throng,
But soon perceiving he was wrong,
He rallied to the courtier tribe,
Bought by a title and a bribe.

But Flood's proposal to change all this was rejected by a large majority, and the Parliament remained "unreformed" to the last hour of its existence, and, as to the last, Roman Catholics were excluded from the House, it could hardly claim a thoroughly representative character.

Yet the Irish House did to a greater degree than might have been expected represent the country, its feelings, its emotions, and aspirations, and it represented still more strongly the characteristics of the Irish gentleman of the period. Never was such a time of feasting and jollification as the palmy days of the Irish Parliament. The county elections were a continued scene of fighting, fun, and revelry. It is one continuous Donnybrook Fair, and the country elector, with a good coat on his back, and money clinking in his pocket,

Steps into a tent, just to spend half-a-crown,
taps out, meets a friend, and for joy knocks him
down
With his sprig of shillelah and shamrock so green !

With the same gaiety of heart, the gentlemen fought their battles with more deadly weapons.

At that time duelling was a recognised part of the social code. The "thirty-six commandments" arranged by the gentlemen of Galway formed a complete set of rules on all the punctilios of the duello. According to the printed rules of Galway, seconds if desirous may exchange shots at right angles to their principals, and lest the gentlemen should have forgotten their mathematics, there is a diagram to explain how this right-angled fire is arranged.

The pistol was the national weapon, the long, heavy duelling pistol, which was handed to the principal by his second; "the flints hammered, and the feather-spring set." Some Irish gentlemen who had served in France tried to substitute the small sword for the pistol, and a duelling club was formed in Dublin—"a most agreeable and useful association"—the members of which styled themselves the "Knights of Tara," and who strove by practice in the fencing-school, and on the field of honour, to bring the rapier into fashion again. But their practices were denounced as "frivolous" by the regular blazers, and national habits were too strong for the innovators. "Well hit, but no lives lost," was the bulletin most hoped for on the conclusion of a 'duel, for the kindly Irish nature recoiled from occasioning the death of a neighbour, and perhaps a friend, but wounds were glorious, and none could doubt the honour of one who had been winged on such an occasion.

But when the elections had been fought out, and the consequent duels, it was with joyous anticipations that the newly-elected Member took his departure for the opening

of Parliament in Dublin. A chariot with six horses was the usual equipage of the country gentleman when he made his usual visit to the metropolis. Strange to say, according to our insular notions of Irish management, the roads were better, and better kept, than English roads of the period, and they were probably much safer, for we hear little of the exploits of the highwayman, who then flourished so exceedingly upon the highways and by-ways of England.

Once arrived in Dublin there was plenty of brightness and movement in the scene. There were Dukes with ribbons and stars driving up and down in fine emblazoned chariots with prancing horses, there were lovely women moving about the streets, horsemen and horsewomen, the military exquisite with his Bond Street airs, the hard-riding, hard-drinking Irish buck in his bell-crowned hat, tight breeches and hessians, and with him the old Count who had served in France, with a long "queue," a gold-laced hat, and long skirts to a laced waistcoat. Postchaises dash about with new arrivals, and the young Member is seized upon at once by friendly Members of his party. He must be introduced to the House, he must stand his trial, a round of dinners in which his mother wit and capacity for champagne and claret are severely tested, amid the fire of "jeux d'esprit," and endless popping of corks.

The theatre, too, is open, the old theatre in Crow Street, lighted by tallow candles stuck in tin sconces hung from above the stage, and lowered every now and then to be snuffed; but lighted, too, by some of the brightest eyes in Christendom, for the boxes are crowded with dark but lovely Irish women, all in full gala dress, and enjoying equally the dignified movements of the stage heroes and heroines and the occasional tumultuous outbursts in the pit and gallery where collegians and town-folk were often engaged in desperate combat, while the soldiers on guard on either side of the stage looked calmly on.

In the streets were patrolling the watchmen with cloaks and rattles, but with little of the Dogberry spirit about them, for as a rule they were of a hearty sympathy with all kinds of fun, and would run half a mile to be present at a promising bit of fighting, and never think of spoiling it.

And when the "House" was fairly formed and business in full train the same convivial spirit animated its Members. On the day of voting supplies it was the

practice of the Speaker to invite the whole House to dinner, and Government and opposition mingled in hearty conviviality—while on the morrow they would fall to on the estimates, with excellent knowledge and judgement, and with an industry quite marvellous to less seasoned observers. Among private Members distinguished alike for jovial and business qualities was Mr. Bagenal, of Dunleckny, a man of immense estate, who had travelled much, and brought home a fine reputation for wild exploits. He had fought a prince, jilted a princess, made drunk the Doge of Venice—or was it the Commander of the Faithful?—anyhow, he had carried off a duchess, scaled a convent wall, had been, very properly, laid hold of by the Inquisition, escaped its clutches, and then to Paris, where he had met the best swordsmen of the day with foil and naked steel.

But Bagenal was unspoilt by foreign customs. At home he was equally ready with the pistol. A young connection of his was poor Bagenal Harvey, also a Member of the House, a man of fortune and of high courage, who eventually took a leading part in the Irish rising, and was hanged by the victorious soldiers. Just to try the young man, the elder Bagenal challenged him without disclosing any cause, a thing he was entitled to do according to the Galway canon. Harvey, who was a little nettled at the course pursued, fired at once on the word being given, and put a bullet through the other's hat. "Why, you young dog, you had like to have killed your godfather," cried the other, throwing down his pistol. "But you'll do. And now go to Dunleckny and order breakfast."

Curran, too, and the Chancellor, Lord Clare, went out together, and Grattan, although he could not stop the progress of the Bill of Union, had out Mr. Corry, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and shot him before breakfast. Another member of the minority being hurt by some expressions of an Excise officer, and not deigning to go out with a "ganger," challenged the Secretary of the Revenue Board, a Major somebody, who was inclined to be restive under this weight of official responsibility, and consulted the head of the Ministry on the subject, who replied: "Surely, as the head of a department you can't be expected to take up the quarrels of your subordinates; but as a military officer it would seem strange to refuse such an invitation." So the major

went out, but escaped with life, while he earned the friendship of his late adversary for his "very handsome behaviour."

But on the whole, as Sir Jonah Barrington, the chronicler of the last days of the Irish Parliament, reluctantly admits, the non-patriotic party showed more spirit than the others in offering battle. This he ascribes to Lord Castlereagh, the Irish Secretary, who gathered about twenty young fellows of fighting families among his warm supporters in the House to breakfast at the opening of the session, when they so worked upon each other as to form a band pledged to go out with any of the Opposition who felt like fighting; and, alas, there were not as many young men of spirit on the other side to give them partners in the dance.

Where was the fighting Fitzgerald, the great duellist and bully, who would have been invaluable in such a crisis? Alas, he had made a mistake some years before, and shooting a man without proper forms, had been hanged for murder. Yet a few years earlier he had commanded a troop of light horse, raised among the volunteers of '82, and had escorted his uncle, the Bishop of Derry, to the Parliament House when the Bishop made his entry into Dublin to join the Irish Convention in almost royal state.

But now that we are among bishops it is as well to proceed to the House of Lords. That remains almost untouched by the hands of time, and just as it must have appeared to the few Irish peers who sat in it last, just long enough to pass the Act of Union. A handsome chamber, but of no great capacity, forty feet long by thirty wide, according to the book of 1792, and neither more nor less, probably, at this present moment. The ceiling is arched, and enriched with gilding and devices, and an alcove at one end afforded space for the throne, and here the Viceroy would take his station when he came to open Parliament "with more splendour than Majesty itself." Corinthian columns and florid recesses break the monotony of the tunnel-shaped chamber, and the walls are adorned with old tapestry, the subjects of which are the Battles of the Boyne and of Aughrim. All this part of the House is of the date of the original building, which was commenced in 1729 on the site of Cary's hospital, and finished ten years later. But a considerable extension of the building to the westward was made between the years 1787 and 1794, including a large hall for

chairmen to wait for Members with their chairs.

For it was in sedan chairs that the Members chiefly came down to the House, always, it will be remembered, in full dress, till the last gloomy days, when more carelessness was shown. The first instance of innovation on the established custom was on the eve of an important division, when the Serjeant-at-Arms rushed into the House in an excited manner and exclaimed that a Member had arrived in his boots, and demanded admission! The Speaker after some hesitation decided to admit the Member, who proved to be Colonel Tottenham, who had ridden sixty miles to be present at the division, and who presented himself splashed up to the eyes and in huge jack-boots. From that time any looseness in apparel was referred to Tottenham's boots.

But the last hours of the old Irish Parliament were approaching. Mr. Pitt and the English Ministry had set their affections on a legislative union, and the money had arrived that was to purchase the reluctant bride. Yet the Parliament, although elected under strong Government pressure, showed itself reluctant to seal its own doom. In a previous session there had been a majority of six against the Union. The Irish House, unlike the sister House in England at that time, divided without any pretence at secrecy, and lists of those voting were at once published, red and black lists, and it is needless to say that on this occasion the blackest of black lists contained the names of those voting for the Union, who had a very uneasy time of it as they made their way home by devious paths, and sometimes under strange disguises. But a mighty and enthusiastic crowd received the patriotic Members, and when the Speaker's carriage was seen above the sea of heads, and the Speaker took his seat, the enthusiasm knew no bounds.

The horses were at once taken out and the crowd were preparing to drag the Speaker along, when some one in the crowd suggested, "Harness the Lord Chancellor!" This was Fitzgibbon Lord Clare, the most determined promoter of the Union. The suggestion was hailed with a roar of approval and delight, and a large portion of the mob started in chase of the Chancellor, who was hunted from place to place, and escaped with difficulty from a position which would have been at least humiliating.

But in a following session the Government had secured a working majority, and

those opposed to the Union saw with dismay that scarcely a chance remained of saving the Irish Parliament. The city was full of troops, horse, foot, and artillery were in readiness to be massed at all the avenues of the Parliament House to protect it in the discharge of its painful duty, and the populace, discouraged and overawed, seemed to have lost the spirit of resistance. One chance was left; the voice of Grattan, possibly, heard in its former tones of eloquence, recalling the proudest days of Ireland's triumph, might awaken a movement of enthusiasm that should carry with it even those pledged to the Union. But Grattan was not even in Parliament; wearied and hopeless he had retired from the struggle. The first day of the session was at hand, the Bill of Union would be brought in, and only feeble, ineffective voices would be raised against it. But happily there was a vacancy for Wexford, although the Government, knowing that it was in the wrong hands, delayed issuing the writ till the first day of the session. But Grattan was elected by a coup de main. He rose from a sick-bed, was carried into the House by two friends, and his old spirit revived as he found himself once more on the scene of his triumphs. He delivered an impassioned oration against the Union. Hearts were moved, enthusiasm was excited, the Government began to fear for its majority. All the great dames of the land crowded to the scene of combat. Lady Castlereagh, one of the finest women of the Court, appeared in the Serjeant's box palpitating for her husband's fate.

But Lord Castlereagh held his majority together by stronger ties than those of enthusiasm, and the division showed the decisive majority of one hundred and fifty-eight against one hundred and fifteen for the Union. Then it was felt that further resistance was useless, and the last scene of all passed before almost empty benches, and the Speaker's voice was heard for the last time in the Irish House of Commons as he pronounced the Bill as read a third time and passed.

A VISIT TO A LONDON EYE HOSPITAL.*

"YOU ought to be interested in eye hospitals, if any one is," said my oculist to

* The "Royal Eye Hospital," St. George's Circus, Southwark, S.E. It was re-opened in December last by H.R.H. the Duke of York.

one day, when I had been under a long course of treatment at his hands. 'Why don't you come some day and have a look at my new hospital down in South London—my 'baby,' they call it! I should like to take you over it and show you all the improvements. No; stop a bit! Meet me there at three next Tuesday, and see some of the work first; and when that's over, then we'll go all over the hospital. That's a bargain, eh? Good-bye, good-bye!' And he bustled me off in his usual energetic style.

I was conscious of a considerable amount of trepidation when Tuesday afternoon came round, and I started to fulfil my engagement. It was the first time I had ever been to a hospital in company with a doctor, and I had no notion what I might or might not see. All sorts of alarming visions floated before my eyes. I beheld myself gazing with horror at a fearful operation, and going down on the floor with a heavy flop just at the most critical moment, the doctor—who is a tremendous enthusiast in his profession—looking round at me in disgust, and calling out: "Here, nurse, dash some water in her face! Feel in her pocket for smelling-salts—women always keep 'em! Bring her round somehow! It's ten thousand pities she should miss this!" After which, I should struggle to my feet, white and shaken, to see some gruesome sight which should stretch me on the floor again, eliciting from him a contemptuous grunt: "Oh, she's no good! Let her lie there, nurse; that's the best place for such poor weaklings!"

However, in spite of my nervous tremors, I did not turn back; and as a quarter to three struck, I found myself in front of a large unfinished building, standing at the junction of six roads, in the heart of a poor and populous district. "The very best place in the world for a hospital," my enthusiastic friend had said. "Look where it stands, and see how easy it is of access, too! Why, four thousand trams and 'buses pass it daily!"

I soon found that no part of the hospital—which replaces an old, small, and ill-constructed building—was yet in use; but just across the road a board caught my eye, directing me to the "Temporary Out-Patients' Department"; and thither I directed my steps, feeling pretty secure now that I should see no operating-room, and no very alarming sights.

The room in which I found myself was quite a small one, and was already crowded

with patients waiting for advice. There was a little corner for the doctor, with a table and chair, a strong gas-burner, and various little instruments and phials; a little dark room—or cupboard rather—was close at hand; in a recess sat two assistants, waiting to put on bandages or try spectacles; and in another part, a little screened off, was the lady dispenser, to whom the patients had to apply, as they passed out, for ointments, medicines, etc. But it was the patients themselves who interested me most. They were evidently very poor, almost all of them, and some were very dirty, too; but what struck me most was the patient, dejected look on the faces of all except the very small children. When I remarked on this to my neighbour:

"Well, you see, miss," he said, "they get nervous about themselves; they don't know how bad they're going to be, nor what'll be done to 'em. Then some of 'em that have got others depending on 'em—it lays terrible heavy on their minds that they may go blind, and then what'll become of the wife and the kids! Why, there was a poor chap come in here about two years ago—Doctor'll tell you all about him—and he heard he'd very likely lose his sight—they couldn't say for certain just then. Well, he went back home, and he lay awake all night thinking about what ever his wife'd do; and when he got up in the morning, his hair had all turned white—Doctor hardly knew him for the same man next time he came. But he didn't go blind after all, and Doctor'll tell you that the strangest of all is that, after he got better, the colour of his hair came back too. Doctor says he wouldn't have believed it if he hadn't seen it with his own eyes."

I looked round at the patients once more, this time with a better understanding of their depression. "Poor things!" I murmured, "I don't wonder they look anxious and sad."

"Yes, but just you wait till Doctor comes in, and then you'll see a change," said my neighbour. "He'll brighten 'em up fast enough, you'll see. They can't hardly feel bad when he's in the room. He'll talk, and joke, and seem to understand us all, just like one of ourselves. I've heard some chaps say, when they come away from a doctor, 'Oh, he's a toff—he don't understand nothin' about blokes like us!' But they couldn't never say it about this here one. He'll talk anything to 'em, Scotch, Cornish, Welsh, it don't matter

what; ay, and I've heard him go on like a coater, too; it'd have made your hair stand on end to hear him! It was when I was in the old 'ospital—the one they've pulled down now to make room for the new un—and there was a coater come in that they couldn't do nothing with—he wouldn't listen to reason nohow. Well, Doctor come up, and he began to go on just like the coater—not as he was riled, you know, miss, but just the sort of talk the coater was used to—and if that coater didn't give in to him like a lamb, and let him do all he had a mind to! Then he'd go up to another, that wouldn't have his eye out, and say, 'Come, come! an empty house is better than a bad tenant any day, ain't it?' or something of that kind; and the man'd look at him and say, 'All right, air; I believe you're right, air. Come on!'

While he was talking a cab rattled over the stones, and in came the doctor. I saw in a minute that my informant had been right—he seemed to bring the sunshine with him. A bright, keen glance round the room, a nod at me, and a "Hallo, Smudge!" at my neighbour; and then, after a minute's talk with the assistants, he sat down, put on his spectacles, and set to work.

While his back was turned, my neighbour had just time to whisper with a chuckle: "That's because I'm a painter, you see; painters are always 'Smudge' with him, and a carpenter's 'Chips,' and a sweep 'Snowball,' and a plumber, 'Never-no-more-three-quarters-fourteen'—you know the old joke, miss?"

I had a vague remembrance of a story about a plumber having been overturned in a ferry-boat, and having gone to the bottom like a stone, by reason of the lead piping he had stolen and wound about his person; but again I had no time to answer, for the doctor had motioned me to a chair near him, and was already hard at work.

One by one the patients were called up with a "Now then, mum!" "Let's have a look at that kid o' yours, missus!" "Bring that squint here!" "Come along, Redhead!" "Here you are, Dust-oh!" Little ripples of amusement began to run through the room, many pairs of eyes turning to me for sympathy, and saying as plainly as eyes could do: "Lor' bless him! Ain't he a funny gentleman!" It was observable, too, that nobody took offence at his free-and-easy method of address.

Even "Redhead," who wore the garb of a hospital-nurse, and was much above the rest in social station, only laughed and shrugged her shoulders a little deprecatingly; while "Dust-oh" seemed quite pleased that his profession had been spotted at once, and "thanked his honour kindly" when he was told, "That dust-yard's the worst place for those eyes of yours. Can't you get out o' the dust into the mud, eh? Get 'em to put you on to the road-work—see!"

One poor woman—it was evidently her first visit—seemed to be a little nervous of coming into too close quarters with him, and had to be told: "Sit down, mum, sit down! There, now, don't push your chair into the next parish!" But her fears were speedily allayed.

As for the babies, they came up close to him as confidingly as if they had known him all their lives, and seldom failed to respond at once when, trying to get a good look at their poor little weak eyes, he chirruped to them and said: "Now, then, Minnie"—or Gracie, or Johnny—he was never at a loss for a name, and never used the same twice, unless it might be "Pussy" or "Sweetheart"—"just you look at my red nose!"

Nothing seemed to escape that keen eye, and the brain was evidently equally on the alert to discover causes of and remedies for the various eye ailments brought under his notice. One little hervant-girl was warned that she was living too near "the ditch"; another pale child of fifteen, a fire-work-maker, was asked almost directly, "You don't often get a bellyful, do you, Pussy?" and on her sorrowfully replying in the negative, she was given an in-patient's letter for a hospital, with which she trotted joyfully off, the words still ringing in her ears: "There, Pussy, you'll get a good supper to-night, you'll find."

I suppose the average time given to each was about three minutes, more to a new patient, less to some of the old ones. The eyes would be examined, the lids being rolled up when necessary; then, a few rapid questions asked and answered, the patient would be told when to come again, and directed to pass on to the assistants, or to the dispenser for ointment or lotion, these instructions generally closing with the rattled off formula, "And, mind, don't let the towel, rag, flannel, sponge, cloth, or handkerchief that you use get near anybody else's eyes." Once, and once only, two or three groans proceeded from a poor

patient who was having her eyes probed by one of the assistants; and this was the nearest approach to the horrors which my ignorance had led me to conjure up.

At last all the benches were cleared, and only two patients remained, one of these being a young meat-salesman, who had suddenly lost the sight of one eye. He was taken into the dark room for a few minutes and carefully examined; then he, too, was dismissed, not without hope that the sight might yet be restored. Only one now remained—my neighbour Smudge (I must call him by that name for want of a better one) and he had already been examined, and was only waiting for a minute's chat with the doctor, who was now struggling into his overcoat with that energy which characterises his every movement.

"I've been a-telling this young lady, sir," said Smudge, "that it don't matter what these people talk—Scotch, Welsh, Cornish, American, coster talk, anything—you're a match for 'em, ain't you, sir?"

But the doctor would not allow this.

"No, no, Smudge," he said, "you do me too much honour. I'm a tidy hand at most of these lingos; but Welsh—why, it cracks my jaw even to try it! Did you never hear of our old Welshman!—that was when I was at a general hospital, many years ago now. Well, he came up to London all by himself, not knowing one jot or tittle of English, and when they asked him what he wanted—'Chwi wrythyf hir goleuwch nghludeddle ddyddiau!' says Taffy.

"Can't make nothin' o' you!" says the porter, and he hands him over to the house-surgeon, who asks:

"Well, what is it, my man?" and out it comes again:

"Chwi wrythyf hir goleuwch nghludeddle ddyddiau chwythwch!"

"O lor!" says the house-surgeon; 'take him away, do!' and off they went to the matron, and then to one of the other surgeons, and then to me; but we couldn't understand a word!

"Well, we clapped him into bed in one of the wards, and when I came to look at him, I said:

"Why, the poor old chap's got cataract in both eyes!"

"We operated upon one of 'em, but he didn't seem to get on much. I couldn't make him out, and at last I gave him some pretty strong medicine—I thought he seemed to want it. The next day, when I

went into the ward, he began stroking himself down, and looking as pleased as Punch all the while; and if we didn't find out at last that he had come into the hospital because his internal arrangements were all awry, and not because of his eyes at all!

"Well, we operated upon the other eye then, and that did a lot better. I got a Welsh parson to come in and see him after a bit; and when the old chap got hold of a Welsh Bible, he scurried over the leaves like a madman, and presently put his finger on a page, and began gabbling out, or shouting rather, some gibberish—I didn't know what it was.

"He's reading out the text: 'Whereas I was blind, now I see,'" says the minister.

"H'm!" says I to myself; 'maybe that minister's just trying to green me.'

"So I took down chapter and verse when he wasn't looking, and hunted it up at home. And sure enough that was the text, just as he'd said. But you see, Smudge, there's one tongue, at any rate, that I can't make any more of than you can of Greek. Now, good day, old boy; I'm off to show this lady my 'baby.'

"What a tremendous amount of work you manage to crowd into an hour or two!" I said, as we crossed the street, and picked our way through loose stones and rubbish into the basement of the new hospital.

"A busy man can't let the grass grow under his feet," was the quick response. "But, mind, I haven't done with all the cases, by any means, when I leave that room. To-day there's nothing special, but other days there's a lot to see to. I reckoned that a case I had a while ago gave me twenty-six hours' hard work. The man was on the railway—a signalman; he came to me about his eyes, and I found that he'd never been able to see ten yards ahead—think of that!—though he had passed the company's inspector. Well, I wasn't going to let the poor chap suffer for what was their fault, and I wasn't going to let the public suffer either; so I worked away, and never rested till I got him transferred to something else. I think those twenty-six hours were well spent, ill as I could spare them."

"I needn't ask if the patients are grateful," I remarked, "for I can see plainly enough that they are."

"Grateful! They're a thousand times more grateful than rich people are," he exclaimed. "You should see the children in a hospital stretch out their little arms for a

hug because they're so grateful to the doctor for taking away that 'nasty pain.' And the adults, too—take this for a contrast between rich and poor. We'll have the rich first. I went down into the country one day to visit a medical brother of mine, and when I got there, I saw at once that he was a good bit the worse for liquor—he'd always been too fond of the bottle. Well, just as I was sitting down to dinner, he was sent for to attend a lady living up at the Hall—a lady of position, too. I said I'd go myself, knowing the state he was in; so off I went, not waiting to get my dinner. It was a pretty long case, and about four o'clock in the morning I couldn't hold out any longer, not having been offered a morsel of anything; and I asked the butler to get me some whiaky and milk.

"'I haven't got the keys, sir,' he said.

"'Then get the keys,' said I; and I had that whiaky and milk, not before I needed it.

"I got back to my friend's house at last, and in the afternoon a note came, saying that the doctor was wanted again, and ending up with, 'Please come yourself; don't send that spirit-drinking doctor!'

"Now for the contrast. One evening—this was in my student days—when I had been desperately hard at work, and hadn't taken off my clothes for three days, I had just got in and ordered my dinner up, when up came a young coster—he couldn't have been more than twenty—and begged me to come to his wife—she was terrible bad.

"'I can't come, my good fellow,' says I. 'I'm dead beat, and I'm just going to have my dinner, the first meal I've sat down to for I don't know how long—you can hear my chop frizzling away over the fire now!'

"'Then I don't know what to do!' he says. 'I've been running all over the shop this half-hour, and I can't get no one to come. She's suffering terrible—I believe she'll die!' and as he turned away I could hear him regularly blubbing.

"'Take that chop off the fire!' I shouted out, and off I went with him—a good long way off it was, too. I found her pretty bad, as he'd said, and with nothing but a bit of old carpet thrown over her. But I pulled her through all right; and when I got outside again, there was that young chap waiting for me with a jam-pot full of tea in his hand. 'Make so bold, sir,' says he,

pulling at his hair, 'will you take a drink of this? I heard you say as your chop was to come off the fire, and I've just run across to the coffee-shop to get you this—if you ain't too proud, sir!'

"But now, come along, and inspect the 'baby.' You shall see it from top to toe, if you can spare time to indulge a fond father's raptures."

I couldn't help thinking, in the course of this inspection, that he was more like a mother than a father to this baby of his, so keen was his interest in every little detail, so anxious his care that everything should be just right. True, I was a perfect ignoramus as to the ins and outs of hospital construction, but even an ignoramus could not fail to see what attention was paid to sanitation, comfort, and efficiency, and to the special needs of eye-patients, by the architect and the enthusiastic helper of his now at my side. The out-patients' and the in-patients' departments were constructed so as to be perfectly distinct from each other, to prevent all risk of infection to the in-patients; while the out-patients' department was arranged in such a manner that the patients, many of whom will naturally be blind, or nearly blind, should never have to retrace their steps, or pass each other on their way from waiting-room to consulting-room, from spectacle-room to dispensary, and so on. The staircases and passages, again, were narrow enough for the patient to touch the wall or the hand-rail on either side; the doors always opened with the stream of patients, so that there could be no danger of striking against the edge of an open door, and all sharp corners were avoided; while the staircase in the in-patients' department was a double one, swing-bars preventing any one from ascending the portion used for descent, and vice-versâ. The kitchens were placed on the top floor to prevent any smell of cooking from penetrating into the wards; the hospital was warmed throughout with hot water, which saves the dust of fires, and fitted with electric lights, which are far better for the eyes than gas. Then there was an open roof where the patients could take the air; and finally, as my conductor humorously remarked, even accidents had been arranged for, the enormous cisterns on the roof being so placed that if they fell at all they must fall outwards, leaving the hospital and the patients intact.

These are but samples of the ingenious and carefully-thought-out contrivances for

the general well-being of the patients with which the hospital teems; but elaborate descriptions of it should only be given by those competent to appreciate its merits, and to this class I have no claim to belong. I could only hope, as I wended my way to my West End home, that the devotion which has been lavished upon this work will be appreciated as it deserves, not only by those who benefit by it, but by those who, with all the will in the world, have not the knowledge or skill to themselves devise schemes for the benefit of their suffering fellow-creatures; and that this gratitude will be shown by a generous response to the appeals for funds made by the committee.

NAPLES AND THE NEAPOLITANS.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE contrast between daytime and nighttime in Naples is very great. I suppose it is apt to be so in most places. But it is peculiarly marked in a city so resonant with noise as Naples during the working hours.

I used to welcome the sunset hour for many reasons. It was the time for the promenade in the Via Caracciolo—that lordly road which skirts the curve of the Bay for nearly two miles in the fashionable quarter of the place. It was the time when Vesuvius put on its fairest hues, and Capri was most piquant, a clear purple outline against the horizon sky. It was the time for the evening meal, and for the theatre afterwards. And after the theatre nothing could be more delightful than a stroll by the quiet waterside in the starlight, with the lamps of the palaces of the city rising amphitheatrically towards the land, the glint of the stars in the still sea, and the sweet, cool air.

Vesuvius is, of course, always interesting to the stranger. It is something to be ascended, as a matter of course. The visitor's eyes go towards it inevitably whenever he is outside his hotel. Its cloud masses are so suggestive when the weather is unsettled. When all the heavens are blue, and the sun burns upon the city, there is something amazingly eerie in the calm moving column of vapour which mounts to the empyrean from its dimpled summit. When the hateful sirocco claps a pain into one's head, and the volcano is expunged, the imagination trifles with the mountain, and wonders

what freaks it is playing behind the veil. Besides, there is then a very remarkable look about its inky nether spur, with the vivid lines of greenery upon them, and the white houses of Portici and Torre del Greco like coral sand upon the coast where the sea laves it.

Its fairest mood of all, however, is when the sun has gone down towards Posilipo. Marvellous then are the hues of deep purple, turquoise, and pale pink, in which it successively attires itself. And at this moment hundreds of carriages are whirling up and down the Via Caracciolo, where the Bay faces the volcano; and the exquisite pageant is wrought out for the diversion of their occupants. But the leaden colours of night soon oust these diviner tints, and when the stars are out, there are few carriages left in the Via.

By the way, there is a socialistic cast about this Neapolitan Rotten Row which edifies. There are no ushers to forbid the entrance into the procession of vehicles of a humble kind. Thus a coster may—indeed, he often does—follow a Duke. Nor does the Duke feel affronted. As like as not, the Duke's daughters, superbly-shaped young women with black tresses a yard in length, smile genially at the coster whenever he makes a pretence of urging his battered little donkey to take precedence of the fine Sicilian steeds of their father's brougham.

Others are in this formal promenade who, though they make a fair show of importance, are nearly as poor as the coster himself. They are people of rank, with a high lineage, but, unfortunately, little cash. These are they who dine on macaroni and new Posilipo (two parts water to one part wine), and who have to summon all their wits into solemn conclave when they need a new pair of gloves. Heaven only knows how they manage to keep out of pawn the ancestral carriage, with its heraldic bearings and antique gear; or to hire the unhappy horse with the prominent ribs, which carries them along with such a methodical jaunty trot. But they do it, and while they are in the Via Caracciolo, they hold their heads as high as their sires were wont, and at a much haughtier angle than any Neapolitan Prince of the modern school would think of adopting.

As for the afterwards, however, it is bound to be a little grim. But they sacrifice nobly to their pride.

Far otherwise is the life of the rich man in Naples. He may have pleasures for

every hour of the day, and dine in the evening in his "palazzo" overlooking the sea, with a garden of sweet-scented orange trees beneath one window, and the strains of guitars and song elsewhere as a tribute of homage to his wealth. His yacht alone is a treasure worth sighing for in this beautiful Bay, and of course all houses are open to him.

To tell the truth, the Neapolitan "canzoni," or ballads, become a nuisance at times. One hears them carolled forth in all the Neapolitan province. They are an industry of considerable importance. The authors and composers do well by them, for are not the broadsheets sold in the streets as commonly as matches or glasses of water with lemon-juice? And hundreds of muscular rascals who ought to turn their bodies to better account make a capital livelihood by singing them through the city.

On a warm evening one's dinner at the restaurant would be incomplete without the thrumming of two or three guitars or mandolines outside or even in the dining-room. When the songsters have started echoes in every corner which take many minutes to die away, they gather their harvest of coppers and Bravas, and depart to leave the arena open to a new troop of minstrels with another ballad upon their tongues.

All the world sings these catches; in the tram-cars, on board the steamers, as a sort of stimulus for work of every kind, and as a vent for the inexhaustible happiness which is part and parcel of the Neapolitan temperament.

The Neapolitans do not care overmuch for classical music of the staid kind. At their theatres farce and comedy predominate. The famous San Carlo—a magnificent opera house—in which the works of the greatest masters are presented, would die of distress were it not subsidised. But anything provocative of laughter is received and relished amazingly. The humour must not be too subtle, however, or the people will miss it, and they will get impatient if it seems long in declaring itself.

Indeed, impatience is a decided characteristic of the Neapolitans. "Give us happiness to-day," they seem all to be crying; "never mind to-morrow—that may take care of itself." Hence a certain amount of the dissatisfaction with the great scheme of reform in the city. The malcontents cannot persuade themselves

to tarry for the improvements that are promised to them. They see only the dishonouring and dirt of the transitional period, and this excites them as if it were to be the normal state of affairs in the future.

Best of all one sees this feature of their character exemplified on the great day of Saint Gennaro, when the holy blood is to be liquefied. It is a scene not to be missed by the foreigner, and he will be the more interested the nearer he can—by bribes or self-assertion—get to the high altar, at which the Archbishop himself will probably be officiating with the crystal phial in his hand.

For a time the multitude massed in the body of the church are fairly quiet. The hum of their prayers—it is a good time to petition the saint for anything they may want, from a husband to a lucky lottery number—sounds solidly. That of the Cardinal Archbishop and the other dignitaries by the altar is less loud. The phial is examined again and again to see if the congelation is beginning to yield.

But as the minutes pass, the Neapolitans on their knees get restless and weary. Instead of petitioning Saint Gennaro, with all manner of tender and complimentary prefixes to his name, they actually revile him. One hears a number of women repeating the taunts out loud with fervour at intervals, with adjurations—or rather threats—to stimulate him. It is their vocation. The scene of the miracle would be abnormal if these sharp-tongued prompters were not in it.

The tumult becomes, indeed, almost riotous when, for some reason I will not pretend to hint at, the liquefaction is unusually protracted. Nor is it confined to the commonalty in the nave and aisles. I have stood by the altar in a crowd of prelates and municipal officers with watches in their hands, and marvelled at the concern that seemed to be in their faces. It means evil for Naples when the miracle is thus slow of accomplishment. No wonder, therefore, that the more credulous of the city's rulers are a little anxious at such times.

Anon, however, when the phial is uplifted for all Naples to see that it contains a liquid at last, and the Cardinal holds a candle behind it to confirm conviction in the minds of the congregation—then the revulsion of feeling in the people is immediate. A rush ensues towards the altar to kiss the phial and the hand of his Eminence

who holds it. It cannot be called an orderly or even a very reverential rush. The weakest go to the wall—in other words, they fail to reach the phial. For the Archbishop does not extend this privilege of osculation for an indefinite length of time. He soon tires of being hustled as if he were a donkey driver, and appeals to the prelates to escort him into a sequestered chapel or disrobing room. But he has to fight every inch of his way; and those who cannot kiss his hand or the phial—even against his own intentions—snatch at the hem of his garments and press their lips to this.

In the streets outside, the passers-by stop the people coming from the church to ask if the liquefaction has been properly brisk. The words "*bello miracolo*" send them homewards even lighter of heart than they were before.

Much as I love Naples, I do not think it is a city suited for us of the north, as a residence. Its very beauty has a somewhat emasculating effect upon our energies. "Why," we are tempted to ask ourselves, "should we work or do aught in this fair place, except just live and enjoy?" That, too, is the refrain of so many of the songs which drift through the sweet air insidiously to our understandings. It is hard indeed not to follow the multitude in this respect.

This is the philosophy which keeps the "*lazzarone*" a "*lazzarone*" in spite of the loud teaching of the lusty nineteenth century. So he may eat once a day, he is content to lean or lie against a wall all through the hot hours, with the gay stream of Neapolitan life flowing past him. He can, if he will, easily earn in a few minutes enough money to pay for his meal. Then he is lord of his time, and he squanders it supremely.

Besides, the instinct of imitation is strong within him. There are thousands of his kind in the city. He is one of a confraternity; merry, ragged, copper-coloured vagabonds, whose chief vice is their enormous laziness. When night comes, and the last song in the wine-shops has been sung, he lies on the lee side of a wall, curls himself up like a dog, and sleeps soundly till the sun is on the point of rising and crimsoning the smoke of Vesuvius. Then, with a contented shake, he stands up and rejoices in the new day that has begun for him.

The "*lazzarone*" is by no means condemned to a life of celibacy as a con-

sequence of his poverty in this world's goods. He marries as soon as he pleases. They are hearty girls—with famous capacity for work—these lower-class Neapolitan damsels among whom the "*lazzarone*" looks for a wife. Probably enough the girl's father will make a great fuss, and tell his daughter she is a monster of stupidity and ingratitude to throw herself away upon a ne'er-do-well of Santa Lucia, when she might marry a steady young cobbler who sticks to his last for ten hours daily at the least. But there is no convincing her. She likes the fine manly and ruddy exterior of the "*lazzarone*," and his quick wit has won her entirely. The cobbler may have saved a hundred "*lire*" (four pounds) in the past two years. What of that? He is bowed and fallow, due to the foul air of the court in which he toils, and to the nature of his work. She will therefore have none of him. Thus she becomes the mother of several "*lazzaroni*" for the next generation, and the household has to depend for its support upon her own exertions.

A man need never be lonely in Naples, for society is here under no such rigid rules as elsewhere. The habit, too, of living in the open fosters sociability. Except in the boisterous month of March, and occasionally at other times, when it is raining or there is snow on Vesuvius, one may be in the air all day long, from the moment of leaving one's room in the morning.

To be quite in the fashion it is well to breakfast at the *Café Europa*. You have a little table all to yourself set among orange trees in pots and other shrubs, and the throb of Neapolitan life is audible on all sides of you. In front is the Royal Palace. The chief street, the *Toledo*, begins where you are seated. The commercial part of the city and the quarter of hotels and "*palazzi*" are here linked. Thus there is no end to the diversity of movement before your eyes. A troop of "*bersaglieri*," with green plumes fluttering and bugles sounding, march by at one moment. Omnibuses, tram-cars, cabs, and carriages rattle by ceaselessly with their various freight. The tourists of the nations saunter hitherwards, a ripe prey for the touts of all kinds who are on the look-out for them. Their white hats and beaming faces are seen afar off. Two or three days a week there is like to be a funeral of a stately kind from the church of *St. Francesco*, but a stone's throw away.

The men may be seen nailing the drapery of crimson, and gold, and black over the church portal.

Having breakfasted, there will, of course, be many sights to see. The Museum is hardly less interesting than that of the Vatican in Rome. Its Pompeian rooms alone are enough to engross a stranger for days. In Pompeii you behold the mere shell of the disinterred city. Naples must be visited for the furniture and frescoes which belonged to the ruined houses. From the bedsteads and hairpins of Pompeii to the packets of charred grocery from its stores, all the city's moveables are here. A day in the Pompeian rooms of the Museum, combined with a day in the wrecked city itself, is as good as a liberal education.

What more easy afterwards than to get into one of the jingling Neapolitan carriages and drive to the Villa for breakfast? The Villa is a charming small tract of greenery and flowers and trees, running parallel with the Via Caracciolo and close to the sea. Here fashionable Naples may be seen afoot, or eating ices in its pretty kiosks. Here, too, on summer nights, up to the witching hour, the band plays, and the Neapolitans come to breathe the cool, moonlit air, or stroll about the gardens, made romantic by parti-coloured lamps hung in the trees.

You take your meal in the shade, of course, with the green headland of fair Posillipo to the right, Capri in front, and the sparkling water of the Bay visible through the greenery which fitly tempers its brilliancy.

After luncheon—assuming you are under holiday rules—you need do nothing at all until the cool of the evening except read the papers, smoke, or talk to your neighbour. The shadows will thus gradually slide from the hot land and the dazzling sea, and the best hours of the twenty-four will be with you almost ere you are aware of it.

The drive in the Via Caracciolo is then a necessity, if you would be in the fashion. The carriage with the two outriders in scarlet contains King Humbert and Queen Margarita, and both have enough to do to acknowledge the bows of the Neapolitan world which are tendered to them up and down the road.

If you are in pleasant company, and with a sufficiency of gold pieces in your pocket, when the sun has quite disappeared, bid the driver speed to one of the palatial restaurants of Posillipo. You mount the

hill, with Virgil's tomb to the right. For my part, I don't put faith in Virgil's tomb, though the site of it, high among vineyards and fruit-trees, is lovely enough. And so you come to your destination, with enchanting lamp-lit nooks in the gardens sloping down to the waterside, and with all Naples—a bewildering line of beauty—before you. The torch of Vesuvius burns red, though intermittently, on the other shore of the Bay. Here and there about the dark surface of the water move yachts and the craft of fisher-folk—some with blazing faggots in iron baskets in the fore part of them, and some betrayed only by the faint phosphorescent gleam from their oars.

Oh, these nights of Naples, and especially these evenings on Posillipo! But the worst of it is that Posillipo is so desperately fashionable that you may be surprised with a bill of hideous magnitude in the midst of your ecstasy. A dinner of no particular luxuriance, and with but three of you to share it, will not, by the waiters, be reckoned dear at the equivalent of ten pounds sterling. Doubtless, it will be possible to tax such a bill considerably. But the effort of such taxation can hardly fail to lessen the tranquil beatitude of the place.

A BREAD-AND-BUTTER MISS.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

THE routine of country house life soon becomes monotonous, even to a *débutante*. To me, however, fresh from the discipline of the school-room, and the restraints imposed by the narrowest of means, Oaklands, with its luxurious way of living and its constant round of amusement, seemed not far short of a social paradise. I could not as yet see below the surface, understand the weariness caused by the continual treading of the mill of pleasure, or recognise serpents in human shape. That we should all enjoy ourselves after our own fashion was apparently the only duty that was expected of us. Cara, I discovered, was looked upon as an ideal hostess, for while she attended carefully to the creature comforts of her guests, she had the good sense to leave them very much to their own devices, and never forced amusements on them, nor expected them to visit "places of interest" in the neighbourhood.

Most of my new acquaintances treated me with unlooked-for kindness and condescension, and in consideration of my extreme youth, magnanimously overlooked my absolute ignorance of the sayings and doings of society, the ways and works of their own world. Cousin Joe, it is true, seldom lost an opportunity of contradicting me with a frankness only warranted by relationship, while Lady Downham always appeared disdainfully unconscious of my existence. But these trifling drawbacks were far more than counterbalanced by the friendliness of the rest of the party.

Even Mr. Colthurst, when the ice was once broken, seemed to forget his dread and hatred of girls, and condescended to talk to me quite as if I were a human being. Our first tête-à-tête took place in the garden before breakfast. Being accustomed to get up early at home, I found the hours before the ten o'clock breakfast hang heavy upon my hands. Accordingly I used to while away the time by playing with the dogs in the garden.

Cara, who was fond of extremes, rejoiced in the possession of one of the tiniest toy-terriers, and one of the greatest Great Danes in the country. For the terrier I had not much affection. He was selfish and vain, and thought more about his plush coat and his silver collar than about his mistress. Canute, the Dane, on the other hand, had a heart to match his vast body, and was already a dear friend of mine, though when he was in a sportive mood he was rather an alarming playmate.

I usually had the garden to myself, but one morning I was surprised to see Mr. Colthurst step out of one of the windows and come across the grass with the evident intention of joining me. At the same moment I perceived Canute advancing at a headlong gallop from the opposite direction. Now, when Canute had once got the steam up, I knew by sad experience that it was impossible for him to put the break on at short notice, or even to steer himself. The only way to avoid a collision was to stand perfectly still until he was within a foot or two of one's legs, and then to jump nimbly on one side. This feat I accomplished successfully on the present occasion. Canute shot past me, and collided violently with Mr. Colthurst, who was nearly thrown off his balance, and whose hat, which he was in the act of raising to me, was sent flying into the middle of a flower-bed. It seemed unkind to laugh, but it was quite impos-

sible to preserve an expression of sympathetic concern.

"Miss Western," said Mr. Colthurst sadly, "I wouldn't have believed it of you. First you allow this savage animal to half murder me, and then you laugh at my sufferings."

"I am very sorry," I said, "but you couldn't expect me to act as a buffer for you. You should have jumped when I did."

"In future I will imitate your every action," he returned. "Especially when Canute is in the neighbourhood. You see, I did begin by following your example this morning. I saw some one in the garden, and my masculine curiosity brought me out to see who it was that walked abroad at such an unholy hour."

"Do you call half-past eight an unholy hour?" I asked. "Why, at home I have to be down at eight punctually to see that the younger ones have their breakfast, and go off to school in proper time."

"Ah, I gather from that that you are happy enough to be a member of a large family."

"Yes, I am the eldest of eight," I replied, with the curious pride that is often felt in an obvious but irremediable misfortune. "We are six girls and two boys."

"Don't make me too envious, please," he said. "I am an only child, and a poor orphan into the bargain."

"Oh, I am sorry," I began impulsively. Then, catching sight of his absolutely unconcerned expression, I added: "At least, I should be if you seemed to mind."

He laughed.

"Now, why should you qualify that expression of sympathy?" he asked. "Do you always speak the exact truth?"

"I'm afraid I don't quite always," I replied hesitatingly. "Of course, I know it is wrong to tell lies, but I think it is hard to speak the exact truth when one knows that it will hurt people's feelings. Suppose a girl asked you if you liked her dress, or if you thought her hat becoming, you couldn't bring yourself to say 'No,' could you, even if you thought it hideous?"

"No, I'm sure I couldn't," he returned. "Apart from any question of morality, it is so much less trouble to be superficially agreeable than to make oneself conscientiously objectionable."

He was silent for a moment, and then added, as though half to himself:

"I wonder what you are doing in this 'gal'ère."

"This what?" I asked, for I did not understand the allusion.

"Didn't they teach you French as well as morality at school?" he enquired.

"Only the French of Stratford-atte-Bowe, I'm afraid," I answered, laughing.

"Well, the morality of Stratford-atte-Bowe appears to be even less Parisian than its French. Do you know, Miss Western," he continued, "if I were fortunate enough to have fifteen sisters, and you were one of them, I should be tempted to give you a piece of advice. I should say, 'Oaklands is a charming house, and full of delightful people, but I advise you to return to Stratford-atte-Bowe and continue to speak the truth.'"

"And indifferent French," I put in, feeling a little piqued. "I suppose you think I'm too uncivilised to be let loose in polite society."

"I think you ought not to be let loose in polite society," he returned, with a smile that took the sting out of his words.

I puzzled a little over his unpalatable advice, which, though spoken in jest, I instinctively felt was intended in earnest. Some light was thrown on his meaning by a conversation that I accidentally overheard the same day between himself and Cara. They were sitting on the terrace after tea while I was writing one of my many long letters home in the morning-room, the French windows of which stood wide open. I fancied Cara was aware of my presence, and in any case I was not interested in the gossip about people of whom I knew nothing, which formed the chief topic of her conversation. Presently, however, after a somewhat prolonged pause, I heard Mr. Colthurst ask abruptly:

"What on earth did you bring that child here for?"

I pricked up my ears at this question. I had seen no child at Oaklands, and it would never have occurred to me that any one could allude to me, a woman grown, in such a derogatory style.

"What, my little Miss Innocence?" returned Cara's voice. "Well, you see, I thought home-made bread and the best dairy butter would be a pleasant change for you all after a course of devilled biscuits and anchovy toast. I knew Sir John would be charmed."

"Well, for deliberate, cold-blooded cruelty commend me to a fashionable woman," went on Mr. Colthurst. "You

pick that little girl out of her country village and set her down, all defenceless and ignorant of the world as she is, in the midst of a smart set. You look upon her only as a new toy for your blasés friends. They may play with her, turn her head, rub the bloom off her mind, break her heart, perhaps, and then, when she no longer amuses them, you will send her back to her village, and forget her very existence. It is like throwing a blind kitten into a pond to sink or swim."

"Well, a blind kitten's eyes must be opened sooner or later," said Cara; "and she very quickly finds her claws. I give the child the only chance she is likely to have of gaining experience of the world and its little ways. If she lived all her life in a country village what credit would there be in her innocence? Where there's no temptation there's no virtue."

"Where there is temptation there's apt to be still less," concluded Mr. Colthurst. "However, I suppose it's no business of mine. I'm not my sister's keeper."

By this time it had dawned upon even my unsuspecting mind that I was the subject of this conversation. I was the only member of the party who had been "picked out of a country village," and the allusion to Sir John put an end to all doubt. I rose as noiselessly as I could, and fled to my own room, there to reflect upon the new views of friendship and hospitality that had just been thrust upon me. The explanation given by Trix Houghton of Cara's motive in inviting me to Oaklands, which I had resolutely refused to believe, now returned to my recollection. Cara was my mother's friend; she had, so far, been kindness itself to me, yet now from her own cynical words I had learnt that she had only brought me to Oaklands for her own ends, because she fancied I might be an amusing novelty, a refreshing change from the fashionable girl of the period, and she cared no more what became of me than for the ultimate fate of a dog or a monkey.

As I pondered on these things a feeling of intense homesickness swept over me. For a moment I seriously thought of taking Mr. Colthurst's advice, and begging to be allowed to return at once to Dawmead. There, at least, I was loved and appreciated for my own sake. There seemed, however, something cowardly in the idea of thus taking flight. Now that my eyes were opened, why should I not stay on at Oaklands, get all the pleasure and enjoyment

I could out of the life there, and return at length to the bosom of my family with my head unturned and my heart unbroken? I knew these people now, and I would take them and their charming manners and pretty speeches for what they were worth. Besides, they were not all alike. Trix Haughton, I felt certain, was sincerity itself, while even Mr. Colthurst, that hater of girls, had shown some concern about my fate. Indeed, that young man seemed to have discovered that a girl was not necessarily a very objectionable person. He joined me in the garden before breakfast again the next morning, and by so doing was the means of putting a stop to my early rambles, and keeping me a prisoner henceforward till breakfast-time.

Cara, happening to see us come in together, read me thereafter a severe lecture upon the forwardness of my conduct, and deplored the unfeminine tendencies of the girls of the present day. In vain I pleaded that I had been joined by Mr. Colthurst in each instance, and that our interviews had never been of my seeking. She made me promise in future not to leave my room until the gong sounded for breakfast. After a morning or two of seclusion, Mr. Colthurst took the trouble to enquire why I had deserted Canute and the garden. He hoped I was not going to adopt the hours of polite society.

"Well, you see," I began in some embarrassment. "The fact is——"

"Now, you are trying to fib," he exclaimed. "I can see it in your eye. Never mind anybody's feelings. Tell me the bald and brutal truth."

"Well, then, I don't come out because you are there," I said frankly.

He flushed slightly and looked decidedly cross.

"I am sorry my society is so disagreeable to you," he said stiffly.

"Oh, it's not that," I exclaimed. "But people think—that is, they say that—that I go because you are there. And you know it isn't true. I had the garden all to myself at first."

"I know," he replied. "You were Eve in Paradise without an Adam, and with a dog instead of a serpent. Well, will you come if I undertake to keep in the kitchen garden and leave you the flower garden? There is a yew hedge between; I should only be able to see the top of your hat."

"No, I can't," I said. "I promised I wouldn't."

"And your promises are not like pie-

crust," he remarked; "I believe they are hewn out of granite, and as unbreakable as the nether millstone."

A day or two later Cara announced at breakfast that she had an unusual piece of excitement in store for us.

"Our annual school-feast is to be held in the park this afternoon," she informed us, "and I shall expect you all to go and play violent games and hand round bread-and-butter and buns. It may not be pleasant at the time, but you will feel so much the better for it afterwards."

"Yes, I have always understood that if we are good we shall be happy, but we shan't enjoy ourselves," said Sereno. "Unfortunately, I have just had a telegram calling me to the bedside of a sick mother. She is the only one I have, so I think I am bound to go."

"Nonsense," returned Cara. "That sick mother of yours is too well known. I don't intend to let any of you off. Theo, we shall look to you to lead the revels; I suppose you will be quite at home at an entertainment of this kind?"

"Oh, yes," I replied promptly, "I am very fond of school-feasts."

"That's right, Miss Western," exclaimed Lord Regie. "So am I; so are we all, only we are ashamed to say so. Why just think of 'Kiss-in-the-ring,' alone; it beats the cotillon all to fits."

"Mr. Johnson only allows 'Kiss-in-the-ring' on condition the sexes are divided," said Cara. "Consequently, no one cares to play."

Trix Haughton and I decided that the Oaklands school-feast that year should be an unqualified success; at any rate, we would spare no pains to make it go off with "éclat." Our efforts were ably seconded by Mr. Colthurst and Lord Regie, but the rest of the party were less use than ornament. Mrs. Wynecott, in an exquisite costume of white lace and "bébé" ribbons, was well worth paying to see, but her frock did not lend itself to violent exertions, and she had a quite insurmountable horror of sticky fingers. Sereno, in honour of the occasion, had donned a pair of new patent leather shoes, which had the effect of confining him to a comfortable chair in a shady corner of the Park.

As for Mr. Johnson, he hovered uneasily about with a fixed expression of forced hilarity on his face, and though most anxious to help in the conduct of the games, was chiefly successful in getting in the way. About half-way through the afternoon, the

arrival of a Punch and Judy show brought us a not unwelcome interval of rest. Mr. Johnson placed a chair for me in a spot whence a good view of the performance could be obtained, and then threw himself on the grass at my feet.

"I am sure the children ought to be very grateful to you, Miss Western, for the pains you have taken to amuse them," he remarked. "I only hope that you have not been over-exerting yourself."

"Oh dear, no," I assured him. "I believe I enjoy a school-feast as much as any of the children."

He looked at me with mild approval.

"We are rather unfortunate in Oaklands," he continued, after a pause, "in not having any resident lady who is willing to take a part in parochial work. Mrs. Broughton is extremely kind and liberal, but, of course, she is only here for a small portion of the year. You have no idea how much difficulty I have in finding competent teachers for the Sunday-school. Do you teach in the Sunday-school at home, Miss Western?"

"Oh, no," I replied hastily, for I was afraid he was going to ask me to take a class on the following Sunday. "I am much too ignorant; the children would soon find out that I knew no more than they did."

Mr. Johnson looked rather disappointed.

"With the proper books and a little instruction that difficulty would soon be overcome," he murmured. "A lady's assistance would also be of so much value with the choir. I dare say you noticed on Sunday that the music was not all that could be desired. Miss Baxter, the school-mistress, is a good creature, and does her best, but she is not by any means a finished performer on the organ. She has never been able to master the pedals. Do you play the organ, Miss Western?"

"No," I answered, as I strained my ears to hear what Punch was saying to the hangman. "I don't play any instrument except the piano, and that not much."

I jumped up and joined the group of children in front of the show, while Mr. Johnson followed, protesting feebly the while that he was afraid this was far from being an edifying spectacle, or likely to have an elevating effect upon the minds of the young people.

Even a school-feast must come to an end at last, and by the time the greediest

child had stowed away its last possible bun, and the final hoarse cheer had been given, Trix and I were not sorry to say good-bye to our small friends, and looked forward to a well-earned rest before dressing for dinner. Just as I was entering the house, however, I discovered that I had lost the tortoiseshell hairpin that had been May's parting gift. It would never do to go home without at least an effort to recover that treasure, so I hurried back to the neighbourhood of one of the swings, where I thought it most probable that I had dropped it. While I was searching about on the grass I was joined by Mr. Colthurst.

"Have you lost anything, Miss Western?" he asked.

"Only a hairpin," I replied. "It is worth nothing in itself, but I value it for the sake of the giver. Oh, here it is; I am so glad to get it back."

"You look upon it as quite a treasure," he remarked.

"Yes; it must seem funny to you," I said, laughing. "No real tortoise would ever own it, I'm afraid; but it was given me by my youngest sister, and I should never dare to look her in the face if I went home without it."

"You are very fond of your brothers and sisters," he said.

"Of course I am, and so are they of me, though we don't say much about it, because we are not a demonstrative family. I should be miserable if I were an only child like you; I couldn't enjoy things all by myself. It must be so dull, and one would get so tired of everything."

"So it is, and so one does. But some people think it an advantage to be an only child; there is no one to share things with, you know."

"But that must be just the worst part of it," I returned. "Why, half the fun of this visit will be telling the others all about it when I get home. There will be enough to talk about for the whole winter."

"And do you think you will find everything just the same when you go home, and that you yourself will be quite unchanged?" he asked. "Won't your country village seem just a little dull after this taste of the world?"

"Well, perhaps it may, just at first," I replied thoughtfully. "But I don't think I could be very dull as long as I had plenty to do, and lived with people I cared for, and who cared for me. I do

like amusement when I can get it, and perhaps after this visit I may long for a little more excitement sometimes. But after all, one can't expect to have everything; one must take what one has got, and make the best of it."

"I'm afraid most of us take what we've got, and make the worst of it," he said. "But I had no idea you were a philosopher in petticoats. Do you know, I rather fancy you have got at the root of the matter. To have plenty to do, to live with people you care for and who care for you—is that the grand secret of contentment, after all? It sounds simple enough."

By this time we had reached the house and entered the hall, where we encountered Cara.

"Why, where have you two been?" she enquired, looking slightly ruffled. "I thought you were so fascinated by the charms of 'Drop the handkerchief' that you had gone back to have a private game all to yourselves."

"No, we were playing 'Drop the hairpin,'" replied Mr. Colthurst. "Miss Western had lost a much-cherished hairpin, and I was helping her to find it."

"It is lucky Mr. Johnson didn't find it," remarked Cara. "He would have carried it off as a keepsake. He was like your shadow to-day, Theo. Wherever you appeared with a plate of cakes there was Mr. Johnston close behind with a can of tea. I never saw him play 'Oranges and lemons' before; he used to think it a rowdy game. It must have been your evil influence that led him astray."

That night, during our usual hair-brushing séance, Trix rather surprised me by recommending me not to indulge in tête-à-têtes with Mr. Colthurst for the future.

"Why not?" I asked. "I know he is supposed to dislike girls; but he really dissembles very successfully."

"Oh, yes, I have nothing to say against him," returned Trix. "He is a good fellow enough, though the women of his set have done their best to spoil him. But

men like him, and he is always nice to old people. He will listen to old men's stories, and even take dowagers down to supper with a cheerful countenance. It is by those little things that you can tell what a man is really like. I was first attracted to my George by seeing him dance with some plain girls whom nobody else would ask."

"Then why am I not to talk to Mr. Colthurst?" I persisted.

"Because that is not the purpose for which you were invited here. If you wish to keep the peace, and be asked again, amuse yourself with Sir John, or Sereno, or whom you please, but keep clear of Mr. Colthurst. It shows such a want of tact to poach upon your hostess's preserves."

"My hostess's preserves!" I exclaimed, opening my eyes. "What do you mean?"

"You dreadful child, you want all your i's dotted and your t's crossed," returned Trix, laughing. "Haven't you discovered that Mr. Colthurst is a great favourite of Mrs. Broughton's? They are very old friends; in fact, she brought him out, and superintended his social education, and, I have no doubt, saved him from the snares of many a match-maker. I don't fancy she would care to resign her post of guardian angel, even though her charge is old enough to run alone. So take my advice, and don't waste your sweetness on Mr. Colthurst."

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Elly's Fiction," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XV.

THE oppressive autumn weather continued for the next week and more, but the atmosphere in the house at Chelsea gradually cleared—at least, the electrical disturbances which had, as a matter of fact, culminated in Julian's departure for the club, subsided. As the days went on, Julian gradually recovered his spirits. His temper, which had given way so suddenly and completely under the strain put upon it by the unprecedented thwarting to which he had been subjected, recovered its careless easiness. The injured expression of moodiness disappeared wholly from his face, and his manner resumed its buoyancy.

Nevertheless, the life of the present autumn was by no means the life of the past spring. Partly, of course, the different framework was responsible; life, especially at this particular moment, when winter society was as yet hardly formed, consisted by no means wholly of a social existence. It was, in fact, distinctly "slack" and heavy on these lines as compared with the high pressure of the season; and the introduction into the routine of life of a certain number of hours of regular work on Julian's part—the first practical acknowledgement in the house in Queen Anne Street, that work had anything to do with life—could not fail to alter the tone to some extent. But there was a subtle change in Julian himself, which was hardly to be

accounted for on such broad lines. He had recovered his normal mental temperature, indeed, but the interval of disturbance seemed to have had some indefinable effect upon him. He had recovered himself—but it was himself with a difference. It was almost impossible to narrow the difference into words. To say that he was colder to his mother, or stood deliberately aloof from her, would not be true. But there was a touch of independence about his whole personality which was new to it; a certain suggestion of a separate life and interest, such as must inevitably come to a man sooner or later, which seemed to tinge his intercourse with her—superficially the same as it remained—with something of carelessness, and even a hint of unconscious patronage.

If the change was felt by Mrs. Romaine, she made no sign, or, at least, entered no protest. After the little explanation which had taken place in the railway carriage she had utterly ignored the cloud which his moodiness had created; and she ignored it, passing away. When Julian was at home she was always bright and pleasant; always charmed to have him with her; always ready to let him go. Her little jokes at his expense in his new character of a worker were full of tact. Her playful allusions to her own solitary days were always light and gay. Nevertheless, the characteristics which the ten weeks of their absence from town had brought to her face grew and intensified during the ten days that followed their return. Her eyes grew more restless, her mouth more sensitive, as though the strained, sharpened look of anxiety which haunted her face during the hour which preceded Julian's return, and during the

whole evening, when, as happened several times in the course of that ten days, he lined out, went deep enough to leave lasting tokens of its presence. Her questions as to his work, and the new friends, the new haunts, consequent upon it; seemed to come from her lips—far less self-confident in expression in these days—almost in spite of herself. They were always uttered with a playfulness which hardly masked a slight nervousness underneath; a nervousness which seemed to be a reminiscence of that first evening.

She was sitting alone in her drawing-room one afternoon towards the end of the second week of their return; she had a book in her hand, and a tea-table before her. But she had neither poured herself out any tea, nor could she be said to be reading. Every two or three minutes her attention seemed to wander; her eyes would stray vaguely about the room, and she would rise and move restlessly across it, to give some wholly unnecessary touch to a drapery or a glass of flowers. Once she had seated herself at her writing-table to begin a trivial note; but the impulse had failed to carry her through, and she had returned to her chair and her book. It was half-past four, and she was expecting Julian. He had dined out on three consecutive nights, and was doing so again to-night. And in reply to her laughing protest against "never seeing him," he had promised carelessly to come home and have afternoon tea with her.

The door-bell rang at last, and as the drawing-room door opened she lifted a smiling face with a gaily approving comment on his punctuality.

"Good boy!" she began. Then she broke off and laughed lightly, though the brightness of her face suddenly ceased to be genuine.

The figure on the threshold was that of Marston Loring.

"Thank you," he said; "I'm glad you think so!"

"The observation was not intended for you, I'm sorry to tell you," returned Mrs. Romayne, as she rose to receive him. "And I'm afraid even if I applied it to you, you would hardly condescend to accept it. How do you do? When did you come back? Sit down and let me give you some tea."

Loring sat down accordingly, with a mute witness in his manner of doing so to a certain amount of intimacy both with the room and its mistress; but that touch

of admiring deference which had marked his demeanour during the early stages of his acquaintance with Mrs. Romayne, was still present with him, and was rendered only the more effective by the familiarity with which it was now combined.

"Thanks," he said; "a cup of tea is a capital idea. But I don't think it's quite kind of you to say that I wouldn't condescend to the epithet, 'Good boy.' I should like to have it applied to me of all things. It would be such a novelty, and so wholly undeserved!"

He spoke in that tone of sardonic daring on which a great deal of his social reputation rested, and Mrs. Romayne answered with a laugh.

"No doubt it would," she said, with that very alight and unreal assumption of reproof with which such a woman invariably treats the tacit confessions of a man of Loring's reputation. "You only want the epithet, then, because you know you don't deserve it."

She handed him the tea as she spoke with a shake of her head, and added:

"But tell me, now, when did you come back, and where have you been?"

"I've been to the Engadine," he answered; "why, I don't know, unless that for six weeks, at least, of my life I might fully appreciate the charms of London. I don't admire glaciers; snow mountains bore me; altitudes are always more or less wearisome, and society 'au naturel' is not to be tolerated. I reached town the day before yesterday."

Marston Loring was faultlessly dressed. It was impossible to associate his attire with anything but Piccadilly and the best clubs and the best drawing-rooms. His face, with its half-cynical, half-wearied expression, was, in its less individual characteristics, one of the typical faces of the society of the day. His voice and manner, well-bred, callous, and entirely unenthusiastic, were the voice and manner of that world where emotion is so entirely out of fashion that its existence as an ineradicable factor of healthy human nature is hardly acknowledged.

His presence and his cynical, cold-blooded talk seemed to do Mrs. Romayne good. Her face and manner hardened slightly, as though her nerves were braced, and something of the pinched, restless look of anxiety faded.

"It's very nice of you to come and see us so soon!" she exclaimed with genuine satisfaction. "Town has really been abominably empty these last ten days. I

suppose we came back rather too soon, but it seemed time that Julian should get to work. Really, I've hardly seen a soul."

"It is a deadly time of year," assented Loring, with a quick look at her, "but I'm grateful to it if it makes my presence welcome to you. Of course I called at once. I was rather afraid you might be still away."

"We came back ten days ago," answered Mrs. Romaine, accepting and putting aside his little compliment with a mocking gesture as a form of words entirely conventional. "Julian has been quite lost without you. He is looking very well, I think, and is working amazingly."

The introduction of Julian's name into the conversation had in neither case come from Julian's friend; but this time it appeared to strike Loring as incumbent upon him to pursue the topic.

"The approving words with which you received me were intended for him, I suppose," he said carelessly. "You're expecting him?"

There was a moment's pause while Mrs. Romaine turned her head, as if involuntarily, and listened intently; that haunted look coming suddenly back into her eyes. The moment passed, and she turned to Loring again with a quick, self-conscious glance, and an unreal laugh.

"I'm expecting him; yes," she said. "I'm ridiculous enough to make that very obvious, I'm afraid! I'm so glad he won't miss you. He doesn't generally come in at this hour. This is a treat—for me!"

She laughed affectedly, and Loring said with mock solemnity of interest:

"Indeed!"

"I really had to be quite plaintive this morning," she went on in the same tone, "on the subject of not seeing him for four days except at breakfast! He has made a good many new acquaintances already, it seems, and has to dine out a good deal."

"Really!" commented Loring. His tone was quite unmoved, and Mrs. Romaine did not see the expression in his shrewd, shallow eyes, as she spoke—an expression of amused curiosity. "He dines at his club, I suppose?" he enquired indifferently after a moment.

"Yes; or at the 'other fellows' club," laughed his mother. "Legal institutions, I suppose!"

There was a brief silence; one of those silences which come when one branch of a conversation is felt to be exhausted; and then Loring finished his tea, put down his

cup, and settled himself into a comfortable attitude.

"I forget whether you were taken with the Ibsen craze last season, Mrs. Romaine?" he said. "We shall all have to tie wet towels round our heads—it won't be becoming, I'm afraid—and give ourselves up to solitary meditation, I hear! He is to be the thing this winter they tell me."

"Ibsen?" repeated Mrs. Romaine reflectively; obviously searching in her memory for some ideas to attach to the name, which she was as obviously conscious of having heard before. "Ibsen? Oh, yes," with a sudden flash of inspiration, "oh, yes, of course; that 'Dolls' House' man, that everybody talked of going to see just at the end of the season."

The first of those startling pictures of human nastiness which have since exercised criticism to so great an extent, and which may or may not be revelations, had taken a wonderful hold upon a certain section of "society," and had become, as Mrs. Romaine's words implied, almost the fashion in the preceding June. Society is always inclined to be literary and intellectual, or rather, to an assumption of those qualities, in the winter. It was with a sense of the absolute duty of priming herself beforehand that Mrs. Romaine continued, with every appearance of the deepest interest:

"Ah, no! I'm sorry to say I was never able to spare an evening. Everybody told me all about it, though. It must have been awfully clever and interesting. But, you see, just at that time one has so much on hand. There was that dreadful bazaar, too. By-the-bye, have the Pomeroy's come back yet do you know, Mr. Loring?"

Mr. Loring believed that they had not, and after a little discussion of their probable plans, Mrs. Romaine returned to the subject of Ibsen.

"Are they going to bring out a new play of his, did you say?" she said carelessly.

"So I hear," answered Loring. "An extraordinary piece of work, with a tremendous theory in it, of course. The idea is the influence of heredity."

Mrs. Romaine started slightly. A strange flash leapt up in her eyes, and as it died out, quenched as it seemed by iron resolution, it left a curious expression on her face; it was an expression in which a light scorn—the normal attitude of the shallow, fashionable woman towards deep

questions of any kind—seemed to be battling indomitably for a place against something which was hardly to be held at bay, by no means to be suppressed.

"Hereditry!" she said; and the ring of her voice matched the expression of her face.

"It's rather an interesting subject," continued Loring indolently. Scientific questions in their social aspects were just becoming fashionable. "It's wonderful how long we have stopped short at the inheritance of Roman noses, and violent tempers, and plain facts of that kind without getting to anything more subtle."

"Yes; I suppose it is," answered Mrs. Romaine. There was a hard restraint in her voice, which Loring took for pre-occupation and laid to the account of her expectation of Julian. She was sitting with her back to the light, and he could not see the expression of her face.

"It's awfully consoling, don't you know," he went on in the same tone, "to feel that one can lay all one's little failings to the account of some dead and gone ancestor, with a scientific mind. I don't notice, by-the-bye, that even the greatest and most enthusiastic scientists show any tendency to refer their virtues and talents back. I presume they are always self-developed."

Mrs. Romaine laughed, as she was obviously intended to do; but her laugh was rather harsh.

"Do you know, I think scientific men are a dreadful race!" she said. "They think that they know so much better than everybody else, and that what they know is so immensely important. As a rule, you know, it's about something that they really can't know anything about, and if they could, it would be a great deal better not to bother about it."

She spoke with a confident, conclusive superiority, which is only possible, perhaps, to that section of society to which knowledge and brain-power are among the minor and entirely unimportant factors of life—except when the knowledge is knowledge of the world, and the brain-power that which has adapted itself to the requirements of society. But the superiority in her tone rang strained and false. She seemed to be forcing the attitude on herself even more than on Loring; and there was a faint ring of defiance in her voice—utterly inconsistent and incompatible with the words she spoke—which seemed to express and define a strange glitter which had

gradually dawned in her eyes. The combination was curiously suggestive of that consuming fear which denies the very existence of that by which it is created.

Loring, however, was too fully occupied with a cynical appreciation of the humorous aspect of the wholesale condemnation of learning by crass ignorance to detect anything beneath the surface. An enigmatical smile touched his lips.

"There's a great deal of penetration in what you say," he said. "Of course, there would be! But I think you're a little sweeping, perhaps, when you say that they don't really know anything. Take hereditry, for instance; it's an actual fact, capable of demonstration, that——"

But Loring's eloquence was broken short off. At that moment the door opened, and Julian Romaine came into the room.

Mrs. Romaine started to her feet at the sight of him with a strange, hardly articulate sound, which was almost a gasp of relief, though it passed unnoticed by either of the two men, as Julian advanced quickly to Loring.

"How are you, old man?" he said pleasantly. "Awfully glad to see you back again."

"This is the reward of merit, you see!" said Mrs. Romaine, as Loring replied, in the same tone. "You come home to tea with your mother, and you find a friend! Will you have some tea, sir?"

Her face was still a little odd, and unusual-looking, especially about the eyes, and the touch which she laid upon Julian, as if to enforce her words, was strangely clinging and nervous in its quick pressure.

The talk drifted in all sorts of directions after that; all more or less personal, either to the speakers or mutual acquaintances. As the moments passed, Loring's eyes were fixed once or twice, with momentary intentness, on the younger man. That new touch of independence about Julian did not belong only to his manner with his mother. It was just perceptible towards the friend whom he had hitherto admired with boyish enthusiasm.

Loring rose to go at last, and as he did so he turned to Julian.

"If it were not that I don't like to propose your deserting Mrs. Romaine," he said, "I should ask you if you wouldn't come and keep me company over a lonely dinner at the club, Julian? I suppose you don't want to get rid of him, by any chance?" he continued, turning to Mrs. Romaine.

Mrs. Romayne and Julian laughed simultaneously; Julian with a little touch of embarrassment, his mother somewhat artificially.

"I'm sure my mother has no objection to getting rid of me," said Julian rather hastily; "but, unfortunately, I'm engaged."

"Engaged!" said Loring. "Lucky fellow, to have engagements at this time of year!"

His tone was a little satirical, and Julian, who was following him out of the room, flushed slightly. His colour was still considerably deeper than usual when he dashed upstairs after seeing Loring out, and put his head in at the drawing-room door.

"I'm afraid I must be off directly, dear," he said carelessly. "I was awfully sorry to get in so late, but Allardyce wanted me."

An hour later, Julian was dining at a restaurant, dining simply, and dining alone. Having finished his dinner, and smoked a cigarette, glancing once or twice at his watch as he did so, he took his hat and coat and strolled out. It was nearly a quarter past eight, and the only light was, of course, the light of the street-lamps and the gas in the shop windows.

He passed along Piccadilly, not quickly, but with the deliberate intention of a man who has a definite destination, until he came to a certain side-street. Then he turned out of Piccadilly, and slackening his steps, sauntered slowly up on the right-hand pavement. He had walked to the end of the street, casting sundry glances back over his shoulder as he did so, and was turning once more, as though to saunter down the street again, when the figure of a woman entered at the Piccadilly end. As soon as he saw her, Julian threw away his cigar, and quickening his steps, went to meet her.

The face she raised to his was the face of the girl on whose behalf he had interfered in Piccadilly ten days before, and her first words were uttered in the soft, musical voice that had thanked him then.

"Have you been waiting?" she said; "I'm sorry."

The tone of the few words with which he answered, together with the expression with which he looked at her, showed as clearly as volumes of explanation could have done where and how the new Julian was being developed.

"Only a minute or two," he said. "A lonely fellow like me doesn't mind waiting a few minutes for the chance of a talk, as I've told you before."

She looked up at him with simple, pitying eyes, and a certain wistfulness of expression, too.

"It seems so sad!" she said softly. "But you'll make friends in London soon, I'm sure. Have you been working very hard to-day?"

"Have you been working very hard, is the more important question!" he said, turning his eyes away from those candid brown ones, with, to do him justice, a certain passing shame in his own. "I'm afraid there's no need to ask that! You look awfully tired, Clemence!"

She shook her head with a pretty, brisk movement of reassurance.

"Oh, no!" she said, "it's not been at all a hard day. It never seems hard, you know, when we don't have to stay late, unless something goes wrong in the work-room; and I don't think that happens very often."

There was a simple, genuine content in the tone and manner in which the words were spoken, which, taken in conjunction with the colourlessness of the face, the tired look about the eyes, and the poor, worn dress, told a wonderful little story of patience and serenity of spirit.

All that Julian Romayne knew of Clemence Brymer—the brief and very simple outline of her life as she had told it to him—was comprised in a few by no means uncommon facts. She was a "hand" in one of the big millinery establishments, and had worked at the same place for the last two years. Before that time she had lived from her childhood first with a married brother, and then, when he died, with his widow and children. From a certain touch of reserve in her manner of speaking of those particular years, Julian had gathered that they had been hard ones. The marriage of the brother's widow, and her departure to Australia, had left her alone in London. Her parents, she told Julian, had come from Cambridgeshire; and one of her faint recollections of her father, who had died when she was only five years old, was of sitting on his knee in their little attic room in London, and being told by him about his country home. Her mother had died when she was a baby; and all her scanty recollections seemed to centre round the father, who,

as she said simply, had been, "a very good man."

The simple trust and confidence in her face as she raised it to Julian now was a curious contrast to the nervous, half-frightened uncertainty of her glance at him on that night in the spring when they had shared for those two or three minutes the shelter of the same portico. But, paradoxical as it seems at first, both expressions were the outcome, on different lines, of the same moral characteristic. Clemence, though there was that about her—as her face testified—which kept her, in all unconsciousness and innocence, strangely aloof and apart from her world, had not spent her life in London without learning to know its dangers. But the very purity which made the glances which she was forced to encounter in the streets at night a distress to her; which made the very proximity of an unknown "gentleman" an uneasiness to her; which made theoretical evil, in short, a terror to her; rendered her singularly incapable of recognising its existence on any but the baldest lines. Her confidence was quickly won because, though she was conscious of a world of evil about her, it was as a something large, and black, and obvious that she regarded it. Brought into contact with herself, anything fair-seeming was touched by the whiteness of her own temperament; and, with such unconscious extraneous aid, the thinnest veil was enough to hide from her anything behind. Her confidence once won, might be destroyed, but could hardly be shaken. Something in Julian's face and manner had won it for him, and the outline of his circumstances which he had given her had won him something else—her pity.

Exactly by what motive he had been actuated in his statements to her, Julian would have found it rather hard to say; as a matter of fact he never asked himself the question. Before the end of their first walk together he had presented himself to her as a student living entirely alone in London, having no female friends, or even acquaintances, and wearying often of the rough, masculine companionship of his fellows. On these grounds he had asked her when they parted at the end of a little poverty-stricken street near the farther end of the Brompton Road whether he might meet her now and again and walk home with her. She had hesitated for an instant, and then had assented, very simply.

"You haven't had to work late for four nights now," she said, as they turned their backs upon Piccadilly and began to walk steadily in the opposite direction. "Shall you have to to-morrow night, do you think?"

She lifted her eyes to his face as she spoke, and as he looked down and met them it would have been clear to an onlooker what was the charm that those long evening walks possessed for Julian. In the girl's clear eyes there was admiration and absolute reliance. In the look with which he answered them there was conscious superiority and protection.

Just at the moment when he was sore and smarting with a sense of humiliation and futility; when in his newly-aroused angry discontent all intercourse with women of his own class had become a farce and an inanity to him; accident had thrown it into his power to create for himself, as it were, a world in which all that had suddenly revealed itself as lacking in his actual life should be lavished upon him. For his acquaintance of Piccadilly he had absolutely no surroundings, except such as he chose to give himself. The Julian Romayne of society, the nonentity, the "figure-head," as he had muttered angrily to himself, had no existence for her. It was Julian's own private Julian, a personality developed side by side with the sudden and violent readjustment of his conception of his relations with the world, who was looked up to, listened to, respected, and deferred to during the hour's walk which lay between that side-street out of Piccadilly and a certain little street at the end of the Brompton Road. A vague, undefined craving for pre-eminence and admiration had risen in him with his realisation of his dependence, and the reflected nature of the light with which he shone in society. To a weak nature in which that craving has once stirred it matters little by what means it is met so that it is to some extent satisfied.

The walk of to-night was a repetition of the walks that had preceded it; the talk a little more intimate and a little more personal in tone than any of its predecessors, as that of each of the latter in its turn had been.

In the course of the day something had occurred to remind Clemence of her father and her father's old home, and in intervals of Julian's talk about himself, she told him a good deal about her thoughts of that little country place; of how there

had been Brymers there for generation and generation.

"You must have been Puritans once," said Julian, laughing, as he often laughed, at some little grave turn of her speech as he looked into the sweet, serious face. "You would have made an awfully jolly little Puritan, Clemence!"

"I don't know," she said simply; "I was so little when father died. But he felt it dreadfully, I've heard, when he came to London; it nearly broke his heart."

"Why did he do it, then?" said Julian lightly.

"He thought he ought," returned the girl. "You see, there was nothing to do at Feldbourne—nothing but ploughing, and country things, you know. And father thought a man ought to do something—that everything was meant to go on and get better, you know—and that every man ought to help, ought to work. So, of course, he was obliged to come, you see."

They had come to the end of the road now, where they always said good night, and as she spoke she was standing still, looking simply into his face. He looked at her for a moment with something in his eyes which seemed to be struggling vaguely into life side by side with the careless mockery of his "set."

"He was obliged to come, because he thought he ought," he said. "Do you always do what you think you ought, Clemence?"

"I try," she said simply. "Every one tries, I suppose."

He laughed—the laugh that was so like his mother's—but not quite so freely as usual, and held out his hand.

"I don't know about that," he said. "Good night, Clemence."

"Good night," she said.

He hesitated a moment. He never went to meet her without a firm and definite intention of sealing their parting with a kiss. But he had never done so yet, and he did not do it now.

"Good night," he said again, rather lamely; and then they parted, she going quickly and quietly down the street, he passing out of it into the noise and bustle of the Brompton Road.

Once there, he paused as though undecided.

"It's too early to go home," he said to himself. "I'll go down to the club for a bit."

There were a good many men in the club-room when he entered it half an hour later, and Julian—quite another young man to the Julian who had walked to the Brompton Road—was discussing the latest society topic with much animation over a whiekey and seltzer, when Loring, to whom he had nodded at the other end of the room, strolled up to him, cigar in hand.

"Dinner been a failure?" he enquired.

There was nothing particular about the words; and the tone in which they were uttered was singularly, almost significantly, devoid of expression. But there was a keen, satirical expression in his eyes as he fixed them on Julian.

Julian started slightly at the words, and a curious flash of expression passed across his face.

"More or less," he said with a careless frankness that seemed just a trifle excessive.

"Who was the man?"

"I don't think you know him," said Julian, his carelessness bordering on defiance.

Loring smiled. His smile was never particularly pleasant, and at this moment it was unusually cynical.

"I know a good many men, too," he observed.

SHADOWED.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"PLEASE, sir," said my landlady, Mrs. Morley, "the new Curate sent this, and wants to know when it would be convenient for you to receive him?"

"This" was a visiting-card, and when I read thereupon, "Rev. T. Sprague Simpson," I guessed that the new Curate, who had that day taken Mrs. Morley's front rooms, was an old acquaintance. The man who kept on my staircase at Boniface in 1881 had not called himself Sprague as well as Simpson, but since plain Smith, of King's, is now J. Branson Smith, and Barker, of Corpus, has lately requested me to address my letters to H. Annesley Barker, it seemed likely enough that Simpson, of Boniface, had developed into T. Sprague Simpson, of—Mrs. Morley's front parlour, and Durston Pariah Church.

"Oh! ask him to come in now," I said. Simpson in 1881 had been rather a bore, frequently coming in without waiting to be asked, and staying until told in plain

language that if it wasn't his bed-time it was mine; but in 1890 I hoped to find him different.

Very different he was, too, in many respects. He looked older and more worn than a healthy man of two or three-and-thirty has any business to look, and his bearing, instead of being bumpitionally self-confident, was nervous.

"How are you, Waller?" he said, as I advanced with outstretched hand to greet him. "I need hardly ask though; you have altered so little. I should have known you anywhere. And yet nine years is a long time, isn't it?"

He spoke as if he found this life a veritable pilgrimage of woe, and was surprised that any one could have endured thirty odd years of it without going grey and shaky—he was very grey himself where he was not bald, and his hand trembled in mine.

"Yes," I said. "I suppose it's a fair alicie out of a man's life, but I never looked at it in that way. I have been very comfortable here, and until you sent in your card I did not realise how far behind the old days lay."

"You don't mean to say," he asked, "that you have been here ever since you took your degree?"

"Very nearly," I replied. "I tried a residential mastership in a boarding-school for a bit, but the rules didn't agree with me. I have been head-assistant in Durston Grammar School eight years come Lady-Day, as the old women say. But, come, take a seat, old fellow, and tell me what you have been doing."

According to his not very clear account of his proceedings, Simpson's time seemed to have been pretty well taken up in going about from curacy to curacy, as he had served under no less than six Vicars since his ordination.

"My health is so bad," he said, "that I simply cannot stay long in one place. I get morbid and melancholy, and—and generally miserable. A change does me good for a time; but I wish I could settle down. No Bishop will give me a living if I wander about; I know no private patrons. And I should like a living."

"Why, certainly," I said; "of course you would. Why don't you marry, man? They say a wife is a good anchor. But what's the matter with you? Indigestion, liver-complaint, or what?"

"Oh, nothing of that sort!" he replied with a sigh. "My trouble is mental, and

the mind affects the body, you know. You remember Silkin?"

"Yes," I said, "I remember him. But stop a bit. Won't you have something to drink? Bottled beer or whiskey?"

The poor fellow was evidently in a very despondent frame of mind, and it was quite late enough in the evening to offer him something that might cheer him up a bit without fear of shocking him.

"No, thanks," he said. "I have been an abstainer for some time."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," I replied. "Do you still smoke?"

"Yes, I smoke," he said wearily; and taking his pipe from his pocket he began to fill it with some of the blackest cavendish I ever saw.

I consume a fair amount of moderately strong tobacco myself, but the reek of that stuff nearly choked me. I wondered if he had been accustomed to use it in the presence of his Vicars, and if so, whether the reasons he had given for moving about so much were quite correct.

"Silkin," he continued as soon as his pipe was fairly alight, "is always on my mind. I cannot help blaming myself for what happened, and it makes me miserable."

"But you were not to blame, my dear fellow," I urged, feeling sorry for him in spite of my conviction that he was going to be a greater bore than ever. "You did all you could to help him. If those others have any consciences left I dare say——"

"But they are all dead, Waller," he interrupted. "Didn't you know? Snell fell off his bicycle, Boger was drowned while bathing, Stansfield died in hospital after an attack of delirium tremens, and Broadley—but you must have heard of Broadley's end?"

"Oh! yes," I said. "Now you mention it I remember. He was murdered, wasn't he?"

"Well," he replied as if doubtful, "he was found strangled."

"And they caught the man who did it, didn't they?" I asked indifferently. I didn't care two straws about any of these men—had only known them, in fact, by reputation, or rather by their want of it—and I began to wish Simpson would go or find something less gruesome to talk about.

"They hung a man for it," he replied gravely. "I fear he was innocent though. I wrote to the Home Secretary about it at the time, but he took no notice."

"Did the real criminal confess to you or what?" I asked, now slightly interested.

"Oh! no; nothing of that sort," he explained, speaking seriously but in a most matter-of-fact tone. "I just told him that Silkin had killed the other three, and that I believed he had strangled Broadley too. Of course a thing like that would be difficult to prove; but——"

"Don't talk nonsense, man," I interrupted almost angrily. "Silkin was dead and buried long before the first of that lot went to his account."

"I know," he persisted, "but I firmly believe that his spirit was permitted, or perhaps I should say, compelled to mete out the earthly punishment of his tormentors. He was not altogether blameless himself, you know."

I thought that it would be an act of kindness to be firm with Simpson.

"Now, look here, Simpson," I said in the tone I keep for the admonition of erring boyhood, "this won't do. That tobacco is evidently too strong for your nerves. You know what those men were as well as I do. Drunkards before they came of age, all of them, and Broadley as great a rip all round as you could pick up in any gutter in the empire. Unless they reformed they were likely enough to come to a bad and untimely end. Now, did they reform? Stanfield certainly did not according to your own story, and we will assume for the present that human hands settled Broadley. Do you know any details about the other two?"

"Yes," he said. "Snell tried to ride his bicycle round the table after the annual supper of the club to which he belonged, and Boger was half-drunk when he tried to swim across the Thames at midnight."

"There you are!" I exclaimed triumphantly. "Where is your theory now? Depend upon it, the spirits usually sold on licensed premises didn't need any help from Silkin. Take my advice, old man, and use milder tobacco. A fancy like that is dangerous if you encourage it."

"You think so?" he asked. "That it is only a fancy, I mean?"

"Of course it is," I replied. "That all of them should have perished so soon after their victim, and so miserably, is rather a queer coincidence, but you can't, as a man of common sense, make anything more of it."

The episode of Silkin was one of those things that will happen even in the best regulated colleges. He was a poor, half-

witted creature, and, as experience had not then taught me how much book-learning some boys with addled brains can absorb, I used to wonder how he had managed to acquire enough classics and mathematics to make those responsible for him send him to Camford. Common sense he had none, and the four worthless Simpson named, who were known to the whole University as the "Boniface Blackguards," seized upon him as their natural prey. At first they contented themselves with making him half-drunk and fleeing him at cards, but after he was shorn bare, and no longer a source of profit, they resorted to his rooms for amusement pure and simple. What their ideas of amusement were may be guessed, but at last things went so far that Silkin's gyp, who had been as blind and deaf to everything as it is a college servant's duty to be, recovered his perceptive faculties, found his tongue, and spoke to the Dean—of course, just too late to save Silkin. The miserable little victim, who was, perhaps, violently inclined to begin with, died of brain-fever. Two of his tormentors were sent down for good, and—the affair was hushed up.

It was an ugly story, which, as a Boniface man, I did not care to talk about, and I was thankful that Simpson, after that first night, never recurred to it, though, as I feared, he became a terrible nuisance, dropping into my room continually just when I wanted to begin my nightly dabble in literature.

His sojourn at Durston for a time seemed to do him good. By the end of the first month his conversation was quite cheery, and by the end of the second he looked years younger than he did when he came. Then there was a relapse, and three weeks later he looked so miserable again that one night when I was in his room—I had adopted the artifice of anticipating Simpson in the act of dropping in; it was much easier to say, "Good night, old man, sorry to go, but my work is waiting for me," than to tell him that he really must turn out—I asked him what was the matter.

"Well," he said. "I was thinking about taking your advice and getting married, and I'm not quite easy in my mind about it."

"Can't you settle which of the local beauties to honour?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he replied promptly. "If I marry anybody it will be Miss Marwood, but——"

"Miss Marwood!" I exclaimed, without waiting to hear his proviso. "Why, man, she's a cripple. She can't think of marrying, surely, whatever your intentions may be."

"Oh, but she does," he said, looking slightly ashamed of himself. "It isn't definitely settled yet, at least it won't be announced for some time, but I think I may say in confidence that we are engaged. Of course, Waller, bodily, she is not an ideal bride, but spiritually and mentally——"

"Unfortunately," I said coldly, "marriage is a bodily as well as a spiritual and mental union. I am afraid I can't congratulate you, Simpson."

I am not squeamish or sentimental, but the idea of marriage in connection with Miss Marwood was loathsome to me. She was fifty years old and as many inches high. She had a withered arm, a hump, a repulsively ugly face, and two thousand a year. The poor of the town called her the Good Goblin, and the name suited her. She was good, that is, charitable, in the extreme, but could be a spiteful little vixen when she was crossed, her mind, though it was not weak, being as crooked as her body. Marriage with such a woman seemed to me a desecration and a mockery, and I was disgusted with Simpson for thinking about it.

As he was obstinate and would not be persuaded to give up his fair one, I saw less of him for some time after this, many of his evenings being now devoted to courtship. I did not enter his room for at least a month, and then one night he asked me to come and sit with him a bit. He looked so wretched that I refrained from carrying out my intention of improving the occasion by chaffing him about his lady-love, and we conversed on indifferent subjects, until he surprised me by asking whether I would have a drop of whiskey.

"I don't mind if I do," I replied. "But you haven't broken the pledge surely?"

"Oh! there was no pledge," he said, drawing the cork of a full bottle, serving out two moderately liberal drams, and putting the bottle away in his sideboard again. "I was simply an abstainer for the sake of example. My health has been worse than usual lately, and my doctor has ordered me to take a little stimulant."

"Didn't he tell you to knock off that strong tobacco?" I asked. "I'm quite sure it doesn't suit you."

No; he said the doctor had rather

approved of the tobacco. Thought it might soothe his nerves or something of that sort, and certainly his nerves seemed to want soothing that night. He kept starting and turning round as if some one had tapped him on the shoulder, and sometimes, after looking fixedly at one spot for a while, he would, as it were, ward something off with his hand and avert his face.

After I left him I pondered much over these symptoms, and when I went in the next night, as he had begged me to do, I found a clue. He brought that bottle out again and it was nearly empty.

"That bottle must leak badly, old man," I said abruptly. Knowing that Mrs. Morley was thoroughly honest, I felt pretty sure of my ground.

He was so startled that he dropped the bottle and upset my glass, into which he had been pouring the last few drops.

"No," he said, blushing and stammering. "it—it doesn't leak. I really fear I have got into the habit lately of drinking rather more than the doctor would quite approve of. But my health is in a fearful state. Do you know I sometimes see Silkin?"

"Don't talk such rubbish, man," I said. "Your health——"

"Don't be angry with me, Waller," he pleaded, his eyes filling with tears. "It's true; he's looking at me now over your shoulder."

Instinctively I turned round, but could, of course, see nothing.

"Oh! you can't see him," he whined before I could speak. "You didn't help to kill him."

"Well, no more did you," I said as soothingly as my rising contempt would let me. "But, I say, old man, don't you think you had better change your doctor?"

"Oh, you don't know everything, Waller," he replied, now fairly blubbering and ignoring my hint altogether. "I had just as much to do with it as the others, or more. I used to go in in the afternoons, when but for me he might have slept, to smoke, and drink, and play with him. We sported the oak and no one ever knew about it."

That this confession was true I had little doubt. Simpson and Silkin had been inseparable as freshmen, but when Silkin fell into the hands of the Blackguards, his friend had escaped, whether because he had enough sense to avoid

their snares or not enough money to be worth catching, I don't know. It seemed that he had organised a little private robbery on his own account.

"I suppose you won," I suggested.

"Oh, yea. On paper that is," he replied, adding with charming ingenuousness: "Poor Silkin was taken before he could pay me what he owed, and I was advised that it would be useless to present my claim to his executors."

"Did you see Silkin when you came here first?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "He has not appeared to me for months—nearly a year, in fact—but he came again soon after I began to think of marriage. I wonder if he grudged me the prospect of happiness?"

"Stop that, Simpson," I said sternly. "You know that you are marrying that poor little deformity for her money, and have no right whatever to expect happiness. You mean Silkin reappeared when you took to the whiskey again?"

The "again" was a chance shot, but it told.

"How did you know I had been a—a dipsomaniac before?" he asked.

"Never mind," I replied, thinking that my influence over him might be increased by his ignorance of my want of actual knowledge of his past career. "I do know, and that's enough. Now, if you want me to help you cease to be a dipsomaniac, as you call it, you must obey my orders. Have you any whiskey left, or any of that vile tobacco?"

Sullenly he produced another unopened bottle from his cupboard, and about a quarter of a pound of his knock-me-down smoking mixture. I carried them off into my room, locked them up and brought him in exchange some of my own tobacco and two bottles of beer. I had formed a theory on the cure of what it pleases the present generation to term dipsomania, and I thought Simpson would be a capital subject to experiment upon.

"Now," I said. "You have had more than is good for you already, but I'll let you down gently to begin with. We'll drink a bottle of beer apiece, and then you'll go to bed. This tobacco is quite strong enough even for a parson. If you do as I tell you, you will be cured of Silkin-seeing inside of a week."

He was very submissive, and went to bed quietly enough when he had finished his allowance, but I had forgotten that he was almost more likely to keep spirits in

his bedroom than in his sideboard. Brandy was the liquor he had chosen to help himself and Silkin through the silent watches of the night, and about six in the morning I was roused by his piteous appeals to Silkin to let him go to sleep.

"Waller," he said, when I went into his room, "please ask him to go. I never kept him up all night and woke him with a cigar-end when he fell asleep in his chair. It was the others who did that—Broadley, you know, Silkin, and you strangled him long ago. You know you always asked me to come in in the afternoon because you saw things when you were alone. I never got that money you owed me, either. Two thousand pounds it was, too. Oh! keep him off, Waller, keep him off. He's going to kill me like he killed Broadley."

Then the miserable wretch fell down insensible. I felt that the case was too strong for my theory, and sent Mrs. Morley off for a doctor.

"Just d. t., of course," said Purvis calmly, when he had had a look at his patient. "Has he tried to kill himself yet?"

"No," I said. "He seemed to think a spook called Silkin would save him the trouble."

"Ah!" said Purvis. "When he comes to he'll want to go for that spook, and when he finds he can't catch it he may try to put himself out of his misery. I often wonder why we don't let this sort finish themselves off."

Purvis, like most doctors, was not so hard at his speech. He sent in a man with the mien of a respectable prize-fighter and muscles to match, who, with Mrs. Morley's help, prevented Simpson from hurting himself while I was at school. By the time I returned the worst was over, and before long the patient was lying at our mercy as weak as a cat and as penitent as you please.

We treated him, as gentlemen of his kidney usually are treated, far more tenderly than he deserved, both as to his person and reputation, but I had resolved to demand the breach of his engagement to Miss Marwood as the price of my silence about the true cause of his illness.

Somewhat to my surprise he said he was perfectly willing to jilt the lady, as soon as ever I hinted that it would be better in the long run for both of them if he did so.

"Yes," he said. "I see now, Waller,

that that marriage would have been a sin. Silkin has taught me that."

"Look here, Simpson," I said. "If you are going to begin again about Silkin, I shall send for Purvis and his prize-fighter."

"No, no. Don't be afraid," he said, smiling feebly and catching hold of my hand. "I know all that the drink did, of course, and I know, too, all that you have done for me, old man; but believe me, as surely as I sit here a man lately rescued by you and Purvis from a horrible death, Silkin appeared to me before I ever took a drop too much; he came to warn me against my intended sin, Waller."

"But tell me," I asked, thinking that Simpson's idea of "quantum suff" might differ from mine, "did you ever see him while you were strictly teetotal?"

"No," he admitted, "I never saw him, but I was often aware of his presence. He used to come behind me and sigh. But I saw him plainly many times, well—long before I ever took brandy up to my bedroom."

I suppose poor Simpson imagined that so long as he confined his potations to the ground-floor he had never exceeded the bounds of strict moderation, but he was still too weak to contradict, so I let him alone for the time.

Afterwards I got the complete theory of Silkin out of him, bit by bit, and a very pretty theory it was when pieced together. He imagined that Silkin's spirit, which had been the avenger of Silkin's body on the others, punished him, Simpson, who had helped Silkin on the downward path out of pure friendship, and meaning no harm, by constantly shadowing him. If Simpson did that which was right, Silkin remained invisible; if he erred, or thought about erring, Silkin allowed himself to be seen, and Simpson firmly maintained that if he paid no heed to that warning vision Silkin would make himself felt, too.

I should have put more faith in this theory myself had not Simpson also confessed that, on three previous occasions, when his remorse for his conduct towards Silkin had been more acute than usual, he had taken to drink to drown it, and that Silkin had consequently appeared to warn him against the drink.

Simpson is still at Durston, but as I have persuaded him to substitute honeydew for black cavendish, he has not yet had another fit of acute remorse. He takes more exercise, too, and is rapidly

becoming quite a cheerful companion. In the interests of science I should like to put his cherished theory to a really practical test by inciting him to commit some non-alcoholic indiscretion, such as forgery, just to see whether his friend would put in an appearance; but for Simpson's own sake I suppose I must go on doing my best to keep the shadow of Silkin's fate as far in the background as possible.

MUNICIPAL AND OTHER LODGINGS.

"THERE'S a good time coming for the dossers," says a stout, good-humoured woman from a shop in Drury Lane, as she watches a carriage or two and a few hansoms which have turned short round and into a narrow side-street. If such a good time is on its way for the poor "dossier," the homeless wayfarer of the London streets, it is not coming too soon, nor in too abundant measure. Yet there is something pleasantly substantial and reassuring in the sight of the plain, substantial, yellowish-red brick building that stands in Parker Street, Drury Lane. The building is not indeed, as an architectural work, in any way remarkable, but it is well adapted for its purpose; ornamental details would perhaps be thrown away on a "common lodging-house."

In lodging-houses in general, Drury Lane is by no means deficient. They lie thickly together in every court and alley and dirty side-street. If a new era is coming for the dismal, smeary neighbourhood, of which the very bricks look demoralised, it has evidently not yet arrived. Draggled women, with dirty shawls tied about their heads; frizzy-haired girls with babies slung somewhere about them, parade up and down; red-eyed old crones lurk about street corners or lurch in and out of liquor bars; loafing fellows, grimy and unkempt, saunter listlessly up and down. Here a gap, covered with the grimy bricks and decayed rafters of tenements which have been destroyed as unsanitary, or which have tumbled down of themselves, shows a placard that testifies that we have now a government in London, for it refers ardent speculators in building sites to the "London County Council."

It is the same kind power which has bestowed upon the dossers the building we have come to see. The approach is

by an avenue of lodging-houses, through the open doors of which you may see avenues of beds, forty or fifty in a room, with narrow spaces between, just broad enough to allow the poor creatures to crawl into bed without scrambling over each other. Some of these are devoted to single women, at fourpence a night, and lolling out of the windows are some of the single women in question, who are watching the small bustle about the County Council lodging-house with amusement. "The toffs has got a tea-party," is the current announcement, and Drury Lane laughs hoarsely at the notion. Here, indeed, are the new gabled buildings of the municipal lodging-house, which, as a notice-board informs us, will shortly be open to the public, of the male sex that is, on payment of fivepence a night. Here is a spacious tiled entrance, a wicket in steel and polished wood, with a bureau fitted with all modern appliances. Beyond is a fine room, an open hall with iron columns, at the end of which in a grand fireplace blazes a noble fire. Over the fireplace is a fine fresco painting, in which the various processes and scenes of labour are represented—the field, the forge, the loom, the carpenter at work with his saw, the mason with his trowel. Bookcases fill the end of the room, which it is expected will soon be filled with gifts; engravings adorn the walls, presented by various friends of the movement. No hall of ancient baronial castle or of hospitable monastery, where the poor wayfarer might once have found food and shelter, was probably equal in comfort and warmth to this recreation-room of the Council doss-house.

At the other end of the corridor is the dining-hall, a room of equal size, furnished with plain deal tables and benches, and with a bar where ordinary articles of food can be obtained, cooked or uncooked, behind which are kitchens where the inmates can cook for themselves, if so inclined. Adjoining, a room full of ranges of lockers, each with its own key, gives the security of a safe for the lodger's belongings—if he possess any—in the way of plate, crockery, and household stores. At the back is a splendid laundry with washing machinery driven by a gas engine, and adjoining is plenty of accommodation for the private washers, where a man can wash his own shirt and have it dried for him while he waits, which for a man with only one shirt is a decided boon. For a splendid hot closet dries up everything in

no time. The lavatories, too, with hot and cold water; the baths, the foot-troughs for weary pedestrians, where they can sit on benches with their feet in a tepid stream; all these, and the other sanitary arrangements, seem to be as perfect as they are made even in this advanced age.

Broad staircases lead to the sleeping sections, of which there are three, each consisting of a kind of lofty hall open to the roof, round which are ranged three rows of cells, or cubicles, one above the other, the two upper rows reached from light iron galleries. Each of these little chambers, like so many state cabins in a passenger ship, but more commodious, contains a neat bed with mattress, blanket, sheets and coverlet, with a share of a window that looks out upon the roofs and chimneys of old Drury Lane, or upon the neat quadrangle of the building itself. Each little bedroom is seven feet long, four feet broad, and eight feet high, and, except for some phenomenal giant, or some rival of Daniel Lambert in the way of rotundity, these dimensions are ample enough. Each cell is isolated from its neighbour by a partition reaching to its top, while over the door all is open to the central hall, thus furnishing ventilation and sufficient light. For the hall is well lighted with a central circle of gas, while electric glow lamps illuminate every nook and corner. Each block contains over a hundred beds, and the whole building will take in some three hundred and twenty lodgers.

The experiment thus launched is worth trying, and if it succeeds no doubt the Council will do justice to the other sex by providing an equally well-arranged lodging-house for women only. But the chief justification of the plan is the hope of raising the general scale of comfort, cleanliness, and decency of living among the large floating population, upwards of thirty thousand in number, denizens of common lodgings, in every degree of wretchedness, who live day by day on the verge of utter destitution, the street, the casual ward, or the plunge into the river which is to end the misery of their lives. But to do much good the municipality must go deeper down than they have done. If all these almost luxurious appliances can be given for fivepence a night, surely decent comfort and cleanliness might be given for three-pence. And the class most cruelly in need of a helping hand to raise them out of the slough of despond is that of married couples with families, those who have lost

their small stock of household furniture, or who never possessed any. For such, doubtless, the last step downwards is the mixed lodging-house for both sexes, generally the lowest and least reputable of all, and till the municipality has attacked this part of the problem it is still a good way from its solution.

Yet the new lodging-house is in its way a beneficent fact. It has started on its career, its cheerful lights diffuse a glow about the desolate slums of Drury Lane, and it forms a centre of civilisation and comfort for the surrounding courts and alleys. Some youths who came clattering down the steps of the lodgings on the opening night pronounced the place "real prime," and a sturdy old Irishman, who came out to find a little drop of the "cratur," declared that it was a "beautiful fine place altogether, an' no mistake."

From Drury Lane let us make our way across country—the country being in this case the town—to the scene of another interesting experiment in the way of lodgings for single gentlemen. Let us go to Vauxhall, once the gay and festive, with its thousands of additional lamps, now the hard-working, rather coaly and grimy, industrial quarter of South London. The theatres are not out yet, and their exteriors are as quiet as the outside of a church in service time, and the streets are in a slack tide of traffic, yet bustling enough for any place but London. There is waiting for us under the shadow of one of the watchful lions of Trafalgar Square the humble but useful omnibus that takes you across Westminster Bridge for a halfpenny.

It is a grand ha'porth, too, on this clear, silent night through the gloomy majesty of Whitehall and past the great offices of State with their dark, sombre fronts, where a few lighted windows show here and there; some Minister, perhaps, is there at work preparing to meet his critics on the Opposition benches. All is in darkness, too, about the Palace of Westminster except for a few lights in the Speaker's house—as if, like the engineer of a factory, somebody had to get the steam up before the regular hands came in—and then we see the towers and pinnacles of the great building dimly outlined against the glow of lighted streets and shops and railway stations.

Once over Westminster Bridge one ought to find a tramcar; and, indeed, there are many, but none going in our

direction, and so with a plunge into the defiles that seem to lead the right way, we come out unexpectedly upon the river again, with the square towers of Lambeth Palace darkly outlined against the sky. But there is Vauxhall in the distance, at the end of a long vista of river and embankment, while its bridge, festooned with lights and reflected in the placid tide, appears a thing of joy and beauty rather than the miserable object it is by daylight.

Nor is Vauxhall itself disappointing. In the glamour of the night, the charm of its ancient state reappears. You see the myriad lamps, the rotunda, the beauties in hooped petticoats, the maccaronis with swords and toupees; and here is a house of a charming old-fashioned style, which must have stood in the very centre of the gardens, seeing all the fun that was going for a century or more. Close to the railway station, and somewhere within the former precincts of Vauxhall Gardens, stands Rowton House.

It is an imposing building of handsome frontage, with wide open portals that send a cheerful glow into the sombre street. There is constant coming and going of people who seem to know the ways of the place, and the turnstiles click merrily as they pass in and out. Follow this sturdy mechanic with his bundle of tools, plank down your sixpences. "Why, it's a penny more than the County Council." "Yes, but we give you a better room," says the smart young clerk with professional pride. He has more than four hundred beds numbered in that big book of his, and he is now in his third hundred. The place has been open a month, and they are doing good business; but there is room for more. "Come again and recommend it to your friends if you like it," cries the enthusiastic clerk.

Well, here is a broad, well-lighted corridor, lined with glazed tiles, and following the burly mechanic we come to a kind of anteroom with glazed sides, which our friend enters and deposits himself and his bundle on a bench, while he nods to a friend who cannot effectively reply to the greeting, as his mouth is covered with lather and his chin is in the hands of the barber. In fact, this is the barber's shop, and our friend, having finished his week's work, means to have a clean shave, a brush up, and a polish on his boots before he goes any further. Beyond there is a capital lavatory with every convenience, and then you turn into

the dining-room, with clean white tables and benches. There are two dining-rooms, in fact, one leading out of the other, both good rooms, well warmed and ventilated. Here is a buffet, where any kind of provisions can be had at little beyond cost price, or the lodger can have his own "grub" cooked for a trifling charge, or cook it himself for nothing. Two or three parties are at work with loaves and butter of their own providing, and with tea dispensed from the bar at a halfpenny a cup. At an adjoining table a clerical-looking person is sipping his tea with a book to bear him company, while a grizzled railwayman is enjoying his toast and bloaters.

At the other end of the corridor is the sitting-room, as pleasant and cosy a room as can be imagined, with a chequered dado of glazed tiles and walls of a soft, warm tint, hung with good engravings. Around each of the two blazing fires is gathered a sociable circle, and talk is going on about this and that; one compares the tramcars of New Orleans to those of London, not to the advantage of the latter, while another expounds the characteristics of the American woman as compared with her Irish sisters. Everywhere rise the soft fumes of tobacco—for every one is smoking, and if not talking, reading the papers, or, as two or three groups of young men are doing, playing dominoes with much interest; and yet not every one, for two or three tired pilgrims have fallen asleep. All sorts and conditions of men are here represented. Perhaps the majority are workmen, but there are some quiet-looking elderly gentlemen who look as if they might have money in the funds, and all are well clad and respectable looking. When bed-time comes we have only to present ourselves at the wicket leading to the upper floors to be shown a cheerful little cabin a degree larger than the County Council cell, with a comfortable bed and well-aired sheets. Only this time, as we happen to have return tickets on our suburban line, we will forfeit the number of our mess corresponding to room number three hundred and forty-two, and make tracks for home. But it is with regret, for the whole place is so neat and comfortable and warm, and free from any smells except the odour of tobacco, that one might feel thoroughly at home there. Only they don't allow smoking in the bedrooms, but everywhere else it is Liberty Hall.

It is impossible, indeed, to speak too

warmly of Rowton House, which is the newest and most perfect thing of its kind, and which seems to combine the advantages of a hotel, a club, and a pleasant home, and all at the charge of sixpence a night. Yet that is three and sixpence a week, and there is no reduction for a term, for the place is not so much intended for the very poor, as for a comfortable home for the man without ties, labourer, artisan, clerk, in fact for anybody who needs it. It is curious to remark the various classes who have found out its advantages, and mean to make use of it. A good coat and hat calls no more attention to the wearer than if he wears such as are threadbare or shocking bad. For a young man who has his way to make, or an older one who has passed through it all, and come to the lonely part of the road, there is comfort and a clean little bedroom at Rowton House.

The only people who have a right to complain of the beneficent scheme of Lord Rowton are the marriageable young women of Vauxhall and elsewhere. If these young fellows find themselves so comfortable with all their wants provided for, will they be likely to take to themselves wives, and will they be likely to look out for their future sweethearts while immersed in the selfish comforts of their bachelor club? But such a danger is remote enough. As it is the young artisan generally marries too young and without having saved sufficient to ensure decent comfort in the new household, and it will be better for him and his future wife if he has a higher standard of comfort before him, and opportunity to put by the necessary savings.

And now as the lodgers are flocking in, some from the theatres, some from the music-halls, some from a stroll over the bridges, and the turnstiles are clicking merrily, and the cheerful clerk is booking more beds and filling up his big ledger, we will pass out into old Vauxhall and make for one of those shrieking trains which are rumbling overhead among the chimney-pots, and seek the scene of our own particular doss.

SILENCE.

SOME one has figured the Deity sitting, or rather existing, in the centre of the universe, with the silent going and coming of the spheres round about Him.

The fancy does not content, by any means. It seems to us to lack practicality—a most grave defect. Yet there is something impressive for a moment or two in the picture.

Even so, some one else has said, do our great men go through their mortal pilgrimage. They feel little affinity with the ruck of us. Having tried us and found us wanting in congenial qualities, they wind the cocoon of their own genius about their persons and live out their days in a web of thought and little else. The noise and babble of the streets and market-places does not concern them. Soon they habituate themselves to listening to it without feeling that it concerns them. Compared to the silence of infinity which is within them, it is but the ticking of a watch against the roar of a tempestuous sea on a shingly shore.

This too, however, is, of course, mainly a conceit and would-be compliment. For others tell us that there are no great men, but only notable deeds and expressions, the work of ordinary men in extraordinary moments. It is circumstance and opportunity that suddenly inflate a man and compel him to go beyond his common ambition. When the time has passed no one is more struck than he himself with the results for which praise is tendered to him.

On these grounds, of course, moreover, the notion of a human being existing in a state of sublime silence is not to be fostered. No man is sufficient unto himself in this way. He may pretend to be, and there will not be wanting many to hold up their hands and cry, "Behold this estimable philosopher!" But his wife or his servants know better. These catch the sigh or the groan or the rushing interjection which all at once disinherits the philosopher of his greatness. There is a vast deal more pride than magnanimity at the root of his assumption.

The worst of it is that, like other habits, this of reticence, amounting almost to silence, grows strong in proportion as it is favoured. The tongue soon gets to shirk the task nature seems to have set it, or at least confines itself to its table duties. Words come haltingly, with a diffidence which does not commend them to the world at large; and anon their egress is even painful. By then the disease—for so it seems—has got firmly rooted, and little short of a miracle or a sudden revolution in the man's life can eradicate it. He

must be content to go down to fame among his friends and acquaintance as a person who said little but thought much.

Yet what, as George Eliot pertinently asked, is the use of having fine or profound thoughts if they remain unuttered, come into being only to be stifled by cruel neglect? Surely the man conscious of unusual mental endowment, who sits with closed mouth in the company of his fellow-creatures, is guilty of an offence against himself, his Maker, and the rest of us. He differs not much from the millionaire who refuses to give aught to a deserving beggar or a charitable institution. One can guess at the plea with which he excuses himself. "I am not used to public or even private speaking; it discomposes me, for I am of a nervous temperament." But it will not do. He has the defect of his qualities like other people, and it is no more permissible for him to put them forward as valid reasons why he should not exert himself, than for the casual ward tramp to decline to pick his heap of oakum because he does not like the job. Why should the course of his life be clear of obstacles when we others have fences and ditches enough? If he will bring his rare intellect to bear upon the matter he can hardly fail to perceive that relatively the task nature exacts of him is an easy one.

Perhaps, as a rule, we may accept Sydney Smith's words about the Englishman abroad as fairly lucid about the average silent man. The dear fellow says so little, according to the Dean, because he has so little to say. It is not his will, but his mind, that is at fault. This may seem severe upon the reticent man of intellect. But it ought to be salutary severity. Let him bestir himself, and we warrant he will be the first eventually to acknowledge his obligations to the critic who stimulated him into a manly use of this dormant ability. There are few pleasures in life comparable to the glow that ensues upon a realisation that we have talents hitherto undreamt of.

"Dante," we are told, "was very bad company, and was never invited to dinner." This is extremely sad; but, as we all know, great Dante shares the reproach with many other celebrities, some almost his rivals in song. It is possible dinner-parties did not agree with him. A man who suffered so much from a sensitive heart was not likely to be able to eat with impunity any kind of food. If this were

so, it was quite too much to expect a poet of his rank to play the part of popular entertainer between the courses. On the other hand it is not easy to imagine that this sweet-tongued but melancholy-minded man would appreciate being exhibited at the hostess's right hand as a mere "lion." There may, in fact, have been design, not natural disability, in Dante's social shortcomings. A man must have a stout epidermis, and be wholly devoid of the capacity for mental irritation, ere he be thoroughly qualified to answer "yea" and "no," and proffer the other conventional dinner-table monosyllables, smiling amiably all the while, and with a discreet sense of the iniquity of self-consciousness.

"He has so much soul," I once heard a kindly lady whisper in excuse of the stubborn silence of a famous writer who would not be "drawn" by his neighbours at table, though they charmed ever so wisely and seductively. Certainly his books were good reading—if that was what his excellent apologist meant. But it seemed to me he rather degraded his greatness of soul by eating of every dish as it came to him, and drinking a glass of sherry every minute or two: doing both, moreover, with incredible earnestness, as if—which was not the truth—he had not eaten or drunk a full meal for a week. Not far away from the obstinate celebrity was his wife. She was a poor, withered little woman, with five times as many wrinkles on her brow as her husband bore. There was anxiety and much else in the glances she now and again stole in the direction of her lord and master. It was impossible not to recall certain words I once read, and which stuck in my memory: "People who have got what you call soul, generally contrive to burden some one with their bodies."

This throws us back upon our old position. It is nothing less than our bounden duty, it seems, to live on this material world like material beings. If we were wholly subjective, then the silent, soul-full person would not be an incongruity. But even the most strenuous believer in Berkeley's philosophy must allow that it is exceedingly necessary a hundred times daily or so to act as if our existence was grossly real. Among men of letters, Goethe seems to have perceived this in the sanest possible manner. The person who takes to himself the comfortable soul-unction that he is so much of a celebrity that

he need not open his mouth to confirm the fact—though, of course, a fact requires no confirmation—or who withdraws himself from active life, and thinks to keep alive and warm upon mere undiluted thought and agreeable fancies, would do well to remember Goethe. On the other hand there are not a few sad examples who may serve him as warnings. As the classic English example of modern times, Coleridge may as well be cited in illustration of the latter of the two weaknesses.

Men are said to have impressed others by the majesty of their silence. It is difficult to believe it of any but the very first of human beings, whose sufferings and noble deeds had become a byword and left eloquent marks upon their foreheads. With others the saying has no significance, or a ridiculous one. It is still a moot point whether or not Carlyle's fits of silence were or were not a merit in him. It is not hard to read the mind of a man like the philosopher of Chelsea, especially when he has written as much as Carlyle wrote. There was much more of the human than the divine about him. One could expect no less. Yet out of question there were times when his silence marked a higher order of thought than mere petty dissatisfaction with his own circumstances.

But there is a silence of manners as well as of mind. This is a sufficiently emphatic feature of our insular life, though perhaps a less amusing characteristic than it used to be. The tale of the two travellers who went through from Calais to Brindisi by themselves in the same compartment of the train, without exchanging a word—of course "because they were Englishmen and had not been introduced"—may be scouted as unadulterated fiction. Yet it is not without justification. A French wit devised a similar situation with the like result. At the end of the journey one of the travellers opens his mouth to the guard. This leads the other to say a word or two and to add awkwardly enough: "I thought, sir, you were deaf and dumb." The rejoinder, "No, sir, I am an Englishman," may be given with what accompaniment of manner you please.

It is a thousand pities that the art of conversation is not taught us with the other elements of education. As it is, the majority of us labour sadly in our talk. The clergy and certain others who are much before the world have almost the monopoly of the charm which ought to season it; and even among them there are

many who possess it not. We are apt to think there is exaggeration in the reminiscences of men who write so fervidly of the pleasures the conversational geniuses of the past could create merely by the use of their tongues. Is there? It may be doubted. A man who has seen much and discreetly read much and can talk is a treasure to his friends. Small wonder that it is so. For does he not tell them much that they want to know, and spare them the labour of turning the leaves of books in precarious quest of such knowledge? Of two men, the one an earnest and indefatigable student who spends ten or twelve hours daily in a library, and the other a man of the world, ready of tongue and ready of ear, and yet who never opens a book, it is probable the latter will be much the better companion. His tongue moves easily, and he has learnt much without effort. While on the other hand the student, though his mind is choke full of information, cannot get his tongue and it into congenial association, and so acquires the name of a poor fellow fit for no other society than that of quartos and octavos. He is not so very unlike his cousin, the man of acknowledged book-learning, who goes abroad in the world with a high head, looking at the rest of mankind through his spectacles with undisguised contempt.

One of Jean Paul Richter's lady admirers once said to him: "The tones that your spirit yields are sweeter without words." If all men wrote books—it is a ghastly idea, to be sure—we might dispense with a deal of speech, though at the cost of some strange physical development in our throats, perchance. But as we common beings cannot judge of the tone of our companions' spirits except by asking them questions, and other such simple methods, we must not aspire to be as dumb as Richter, without loss—according to Madame Von Kalb—might have been.

But if a man's silence is in any case to be considered admirable, what shall be said of Nature's silences at their best? Here, at any rate, we seem to get a glimpse of the true sublime.

Take a Norwegian winter on the high fjelds. A windless January day here is bound to leave its mark on the man who experiences it for the first time. He is between the cold, blue heavens and the far-stretching valley of speckless white, with the white line of the mountains on either hand. There is no other colour to

be seen—just blue and white, and a silence that can be felt. Lower down, where the firs begin to creep up from the silent river, it is a little different, but not very. Here the dark trees stand motionless, with their many arms stretched out weighted with snow, and still there is silence. The imagination, you might think, would freeze into rigidity amid such surroundings. Really it does no such thing. It travels to and fro between the blue above and the white earth in a state of almost improper exhilaration!

From the high fjelds of the Valdres or Hallingdal to the seas of the tropics is a far cry. Yet here, too, you may see nature in a very quiet mood at times. I have lain on my back on the deck of a yacht, in a midsummer calm, and hardly noticed the deflection of the mast from the perpendicular—so slight was the throbbing on the ocean's surface. Thus idling I have watched the sun slide to the west and vanish with its familiar pageant of crimson and gold; stared at the stars as they first blinked into existence and then stared strongly back at me through the silent hours; and anon marked their waning lustre, and the rose glow in the east, telling of the new day thus born with so little fuss and in such heavenly peace. All the while there was no sound save the rare creaking of the ship, or the slippered foot-fall of a seaman as he stole upon deck to look at the heavens, and wonder in a whisper when a breeze would spring up.

Perhaps this was rather a garish sort of silence, but once shared in this way with dear Mother Nature, its contriver, it is not to be forgotten. Nor would one desire any stronger mood in preference to it.

Lastly, take the London streets an hour or two after the witching hour, or on the frontier of the dawn. People talk about living in downright earnestness when they go from rout to rout and cram as much diversion as possible into twelve or fifteen hours of the twenty-four. It is nothing to the taste of life you may get any placid night in town by simply staying out of bed and idling about with a certain aimlessness. Look at the moonlight on the Thames, and all the mysterious inert masses of brick and stone on the river's banks. Look at the reflection of the stars and London's myriad lamps in the dark, glossy river. You hear your own echo, nothing more, until the clocks strike the hour. It is an awful joy to the imagination. There is really nothing in the world like it. You

seem to be feeling the pulse of existence, the one survivor of the human race, prepared at a moment's notice to see all London's many-storeyed buildings topple to pieces like a child's toy castle, and the whole world vanish into nothingness. For the time you are more than a mere earthly king. As the sole relic of the race, you will doubtless be spared when this huge cataclysm comes about. There may be the tail of a comet to play the part of Bucephalus and transport you—and you only—to some new arena of the universe.

It seems a pity that the rumbling of a cart full of cabbages should at length prick your glorious bubble of fancy. The grey streak in the horizon over London Bridge yet further warns you that this magnificent debauch of silence is at an end.

A BREAD-AND-BUTTER MISS.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER IV.

It seemed to be the fashion at Oaklands for people to pair off together, and it was apparently taken for granted by the rest of the party that I should pair off with Sir John.

Our riding-lessons still continued, and gave occasion for a good deal of confidential intercourse. After the conversation that I had overheard between Cara and Mr. Colthurst, I took Sir John's attentions very much as a matter of course, paying little heed to his attempts at flirtation, and either laughing off his sentimental speeches, or affecting not to understand them. In vain he hinted his craving for sympathy, his need of a kindred spirit, and the emptiness of his life, and vaguely alluded to fetters that could not keep the heart in bondage.

Finding that his sentiment left me wholly unmoved, he changed his tactics, and assumed a paternal manner which was more successful in helping to win my confidence. I was so accustomed to be regarded as a child, that this treatment seemed natural enough from a man of his age, and I was too inexperienced to resent, or even to realise the familiarity for which it served as an excuse.

It was undeniably pleasant to be made much of, and to feel that one person at least appreciated me, and thought that I could do and say no wrong. I came to look upon Sir John in the light of a favourite uncle, or an old friend of the family, and

took it as a matter of course when he addressed me as his "dear child." The confidence with which this fatherly tone had inspired me was, however, somewhat shaken by an incident that occurred on the occasion of the first ride that I was allowed to take beyond the limits of the Park.

It had been arranged that some of us should ride one afternoon to the top of a hill some miles away, whence a distant view of the sea could be obtained. It was a sunny autumn day, and our little cavalcade, headed by Cara and Mr. Colthurst, set off in excellent spirits. Our way lay through narrow lanes, where the brambles seemed to be throwing out long claws to catch our habits. There was often only room for two to ride abreast, and the intervals between the couples gradually grew longer and longer until Sir John and I found ourselves virtually alone. Quicksilver, whom my companion led by a short rein, behaved with exemplary steadiness, though he showed a rather inconvenient affection for Sir John's horse, edging so close to it that I felt afraid he would squeeze its rider's leg. But Sir John assured me that he did not mind in the least; he rather liked it.

When we reached the top of the hill from whence the view of the German Ocean was to be obtained, we found the rest of the party already assembled. The setting sun cast a great streak of red light across the water, and a little boat with crimson-dyed sails was floating out towards the open sea.

"Can you imagine anything more delightful," asked Sir John, "than to sail in a boat like that along a path of sunshine, with the person you care for most at your side? To sail on and on till you came to Greece or the Fortunate Isles, and never to return to this dull, cold island and its dull, cold people?"

"It would depend a good deal upon the weather," I said thoughtfully, as a reminiscence of a day's sailing during one of our seaside holidays came back to me. "And how would you get to Greece from Yarmouth, for example? Wouldn't you have to go round by the Bay of Biscay?"

"Oh, don't ask me to go into all those horrible matter-of-fact details," he exclaimed, half-laughing, half-impatient. "There is certainly nothing so prosaic as youth. I don't believe you have a grain of romance in your whole composition, though how with those eyes—"

However, it is time to be turning homewards. The others have already gone on."

We had not proceeded far when I discovered that Quicksilver's whole personality seemed to have undergone a change for the worse. His pleasure at the knowledge that his head was turned towards his stable was clearly too intense to allow him to control his spirits. He fretted at the bit, tried to get beyond Sir John's horse, and when restrained by the leading-rein, adopted a sidling method of procedure which was decidedly alarming. I was secretly a good deal disturbed, but I hoped that I might remain on terms with my steed until we reached home. Unfortunately, just as we arrived at the Park gates, a cock pheasant sprang up almost from under our horses' feet with a noise like a small dynamite explosion. This proved too much for Quicksilver's excited nerves. He bounded violently to one side, snapping the leading-rein; then in delight at his freedom, he threw up his heels, and sent me neatly over his head.

I suppose I must have been stunned for a moment, for when I came to my senses I found myself supported by Sir John's arm, with his face close to mine.

"Theo," he was saying in trembling tones, "Theo, my darling, open your eyes, and tell me you are not killed."

Much more alarmed at this warmth than at my tumble, I sat up, and disengaging myself from the arm that encircled me, I answered with as much composure as I could assume:

"What's the matter? I am all right; I don't think I have broken any bones."

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed devoutly. "I should never have forgiven myself if a hair of your dear little head had been hurt."

"I fancy it is just my hair that is hurt," I replied, trying to laugh. "At least it seems to be all down my back."

"Well, you have pluck," he remarked admiringly. "Most girls would have cried or fainted after such a cropper. Do you think you will be able to ride home if I walk by the pony's side?"

"Oh, yes," I said, though I still felt a little dizzy. "And let us make a compact not to tell any one about my having had a tumble. I should get so teased about it."

"Certainly, if you are sure you are not hurt," he replied. "It shall remain a secret for ever between you and me."

After this experience I felt a little afraid

of Sir John, and carefully avoided him during the evening. I found it difficult, however, to attach myself to any other member of the party without feeling that I was a bad third. I was compelled at length to take refuge with Joey, but even he seemed to look upon my society as a doubtful blessing, and no doubt would have preferred to take his nap in peace.

The evening was dull, an unusual calamity for Oaklands. Sereno was cross, and refused to sing, frankly declaring that he had eaten too much ice-pudding for dinner. Cara, who was an insatiable gambler, proposed her favourite poker, but no one responded with much enthusiasm.

"Do you never get tired of poker?" asked Mr. Colthurst, with an ill-disguised yawn.

"It does as well as anything else," returned Cara. "We are not all as blasé as you, fortunately. You seem tired of everything; what you want is a little adversity for a change."

"I dare say you are right," he said, sitting down beside her, and speaking as though half to himself. "I have had very little but so-called pleasure and amusement for thirty-five years. I feel sometimes as I did when I was a small boy in the long summer holidays. For the first week or so I enjoyed myself to my heart's content. But there always came a time when I got tired of play, though I wouldn't own it. I was secretly rather pleased when I was made to do a holiday task; at least, I felt better afterwards. I sometimes wish now that I could be set down to a holiday task. Or, rather, I wish I was man enough to set myself my own task."

"The fact is, you've been thoroughly spoilt," returned Cara. "You want something to cry for. After all, ours is a very good world as long as one has money and health, and even comparative youth. You have practically everything the heart can desire. What more do you want?"

"I don't know," he said slowly. "Perhaps, whatever it is, I'm better without it. Wasn't it Dr. Watts who said: 'For what we want, or think we do, 'tis better still to want'? I believe those apparently simple lines are inspired by the most subtle philosophy."

There was a pause. Joey had fallen into a peaceful doze, and I was reduced to the last resource of looking over a book of views of Switzerland. The couple near me paid no heed to my insignificant presence.

"I suppose you are going on with us to the Fanshaws' next week," continued Cara at length.

"No," replied Mr. Colthurst shortly.

"Not going! But you were asked, I know." There was a change in Cara's tone. "Then where are you going?" she enquired.

"I haven't quite made up my mind," he replied. "Yesterday I thought of pretending that I had lost all my money, and going out to a sheep-farm in Australia."

"Australia!" exclaimed Cara. "I should like to see you roughing it on a sheep-run. But since yesterday you have had time to change your mind half-a-dozen times. What is it to be now? An ostrich-farm at the Cape, or a coffee-plantation in Ceylon? I wouldn't mind betting that you will end in the Fanshaws' after all."

"No," he replied. "It suddenly occurred to me that I had a place of my own in the wilds of Westmoreland. I believe there are several farms running to seed because no tenants can be found for them. If it wasn't for the mines I should be no better than a decayed gentleman. My latest idea is to go and live on my own land, plough my own fields, shear my own sheep, and, as a natural consequence, be virtuous and happy."

"And deadly dull," put in Cara. "I wonder how long that freak would last. As you are an obstinate man, I think you might stand it for a fortnight. At the end of that time you would come back to your old life like a fish gasping for water."

"I'm not so sure of that," he said meditatively. "It would be a good time to begin. There would be shooting—if they do shoot in Westmoreland; and in a few weeks there would be hunting; and I shouldn't be lonely. Of course, I should marry the inevitable dairymaid, who would make the butter, feed the chickens, and play 'Home, Sweet Home' on the concertina in the evening."

Cara laughed contemptuously.

"What a charming picture of domestic bliss!" she said. "What a pity it is only a dream, for you'll never marry a dairymaid!"

"Why not? What is to prevent me?" he asked, as seriously as though the idea were something more than a joke to him.

"Oh, only your own good sense," returned Cara lightly. "Of course, you are at liberty to marry a whole register-office full of dairy and other maids if your tastes

really lie in that direction. But come, we must go and wake these people up; they all seem to be following Joey's example to-night. Here is my poor Theo actually reduced to looking at photographs."

The following morning Sir John and his semi-paternal attentions were effectually put out of my head by an unexpected event which amused almost as much as it surprised me. Trix Haughton and I were sitting under the big cedar watching an exciting set of tennis between Lord Regie and Captain Ayrton, when we perceived Cara hurrying across the lawn to join us.

"Mrs. Broughton looks as if she had an interesting piece of news to tell us," remarked Trix. "Nothing less than a marriage or a death could make her move at such a rate."

"Theo," said Cara as soon as she came up to us, "just come with me for a minute; I want to speak to you."

She took me by the arm, and led me into the kitchen-garden.

"There's nothing wrong, is there?" I asked uneasily. "I heard from home this morning."

"No, no," she replied. "Quite the contrary. Mr. Johnson is here; can you guess what he has come for?"

I thought for a moment, and then exclaimed in dismay:

"Not to ask me to take a class in the Sunday school next Sunday? He did hint at it the last time he was here; but I really couldn't."

"Yes, my dear; he wants you to take a class in his Sunday school, not only next Sunday, but for all future Sundays. He has come to ask Joey's permission to pay his addresses to you. I believe those were his very words. Do you know what that means, Miss Innocence?"

For a moment my head turned round, and my eyes and mouth opened to their widest extent. Then my feelings found vent in a peal of prolonged laughter.

"Do you mean he wants to marry me?" I asked as soon as I could find words. "Why, he is quite old—and bald—and wears spectacles!"

"Yes, I dare say the idea may seem absurd at first sight to your youthful mind," said Cara, "but it is my duty to put the case before you in every light. I suppose you know that you are as poor as rate, and that you six girls can't possibly all live at home when you are grown up.

You must either marry, or earn your own living as governesses or something. Now you can't have many opportunities of marrying even as well as this; for, let me tell you, Mr. Johnson is a parti not altogether to be despised. The living is a good one with a capital house, and I know he has private means. I don't suppose his income is less than a thousand a year, and you could live very comfortably upon that in his position. He would keep you a pony-cart, of course, and I dare say you might have a week in town during the May meetings, besides a month at the seaside in the summer. Then as to the man himself, I allow he isn't much to look at, but he is a gentleman, and really only forty, though he looks more. You must remember there is some drawback to every lot."

I had allowed Cara to wander on thus far uninterrupted. Now, however, I recovered my tongue, and said:

"A husband one doesn't care for must be an uncommonly big drawback. Could you have married Mr. Johnson yourself, Cara?"

"I married Joey," returned Cara, with her usual cynical frankness. "And I don't suppose he was ever any woman's ideal. But Joey and I have got on very well, thanks to his having twenty thousand a year. I must allow, however, that I was thirty when I accepted him."

"I'm afraid Mr. Johnson has not gilding enough," I remarked. "But perhaps when I am thirty I may look upon the matter in a different light. Till then I prefer poverty and liberty to a comfortable income encumbered with an uninteresting husband."

"Well, of course, I don't want to force you," said Cara. "You have plenty of time before you, though not much opportunity. You had better go and tell Joey you don't wish for Mr. Johnson. Joey can give him a hint not to bother you any more; he is the sort of man to be very easily choked off."

"But won't you tell cousin Joe?" I asked nervously.

"No, no; if I tell him he will think I have been setting you against Mr. Johnson, and be annoyed with both of us. If you tell him I have been trying to persuade you to become the Rectress of Oaklands, he will probably take your part."

In much trepidation I made my way to Joey's study, where I found him looking

as cross as if a fit of the gout were imminent. In a few confused sentences I explained that, much as Cara wished it, I could never become Mrs. Johnson. Joey looked as if he would have liked to find a way of disagreeing with both of us, but that being impossible, he chose the obvious course of disagreeing with his wife.

"Of course, the idea was absurd," he remarked testily. "You are much too young to think about such nonsense, and the man is old enough to be your father. I should have thought your cousin might have had the sense to see that, but women are always crazy for a marriage. Now run away, and I'll see you hear no more about the parson."

Much relieved I returned to the tennis-ground, where I found Cara and Trix with their heads close together.

"Oh, you little rascal!" cried the latter, shaking her racket at me. "What do you mean by looking as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, when all the time you are breaking the heart of the most eligible parson in the neighbourhood?"

"Cara," I said reproachfully, "you shouldn't have told."

"My dear," returned that lady. "I don't profess to be made of anything but flesh and blood. How could you expect me to keep it to myself?"

In spite of my threats and entreaties the secret leaked out, for by luncheon-time the whole party was aware of it, and seemed to look upon it as an excellent joke.

"Now we know why you played 'Drop the Handkerchief' and 'Oranges and Lemons' with such skill and science," remarked Lord Regie as I made my appearance in the dining-room.

"Yes, and now we know why you poured hot tea over the infants with so much devotion," chimed in Sereno. "It was rather too bad, though, to give the poor fellow such open encouragement when you had no serious intentions."

"I had set my heart on giving you a pony and cart for a wedding present," said Cara. "I have the pony in my eye at this moment. He is a dark chestnut, and steps up to his nose. In brown harness, brass-mounted, he would look as smart as paint."

"I am sorry to have disappointed you all," I said, trying to laugh off my embarrassment. "I shall remember that pony and cart, Cara, and expect you to be as good as your word when the interesting event really does come off."

I found it impossible to look upon Mr Johnson's proposal in a serious light. I seemed incredible that I, who only a few weeks before had been a mere school-girl, with a pronounced tendency for shirking lessons and getting into scrapes, should be invited by a staid, middle-aged clergyman to become his helpmate for life, the partner of his joys and woes, the mistress of his most respectable household.

I tried to imagine myself ordering the Rectory dinner and scolding the Rectory cook, but my imagination was not equal to the strain. The whole matter appeared to me in the light of one huge joke. When I talked over my first proposal with Trix that night, however, she put the case before me from a different point of view.

"Of course you were quite right to refuse the man," she said. "Unless there's heaps of money, and the woman has no heart, as in your cousin's case, a loveless marriage must be a failure. All the same, don't laugh about it; you ought to feel some sympathy for the disappointed one."

"But one can't imagine Mr. Johnson as a blighted being," I said, trying to repress a giggle. "He doesn't look the part."

"That has nothing to do with it," returned Trix. "Do you suppose that a man cannot suffer because he wears spectacles, or that a heart is incompatible with mutton-shop whiskers? However, until a woman knows what love is herself, she never feels sympathy for the man who loves her. She looks upon his affection as a compliment or an impertinence according to the manner of man that he is. Before I knew George, I was quite as hard as you. I could not realize that a man who professed to love me could feel much pain at my refusal. I am afraid I often encouraged people and led them on just for the fun of the thing. I looked on them as playfellows and nothing more. If they chose to make fools of themselves about me, I thought that was their own look-out. I had never felt anything myself, and I could not give them credit for suffering much discomfort on my account. I was a child, as you are still, with no desire beyond amusement and plenty of human toys. But since I have known what love is, I have felt sorry for the people who cared for me, however uninteresting they may have been. Wait till you have an unfortunate love affair yourself, and you will feel sympathy even for Mr. Johnson."

"But your course of true love seems to

have run smoothly," I said. "What do you know about suffering?"

"More than enough. When you first fall in love, before you even know that you have taken the malady, there is a harrowing uncertainty about everything. I'll tell you a little bit of my experience if you like. You may find it useful some day. George, as you may have seen, is rather an undemonstrative sort of man. We took to each other from the very first; I suppose because we are so different in character; but for a long time he did not say anything definite, because he was too shy, and he fancied I could not really care for him. I had a kind of instinctive feeling that he liked me, and yet I couldn't be sure. Besides, I hadn't made up my mind that I liked him, except as a friend. Matters were in this state when another girl came along. She was what I call a creepy-crawly girl. Do you know the sort I mean?"

"No, I don't think I do," I replied, feeling exactly as if I were reading a novel which had all the advantage of being true.

"Well, she was one of those girls who don't care about any man unless they are quite sure some one else wants him. They like flirting with married men or engaged men just for the fun of taking them away from their rightful owners, and they will stick at nothing to gain their ends. Well, this girl saw that George liked me, so she did her best to put a spoke in the wheel, and very nearly succeeded. She made up to him and flattered him, which, as he is a modest person, he rather enjoyed, and then she told him that I was secretly engaged to a rich but very objectionable man who was at our house a good deal just then. When she had made George thoroughly miserable she told me that he had been making love to her, and asked me whether I would advise her to accept him. Being in the habit of speaking the truth myself, I believed every word she said, and snubbed George, who very nearly went off to India without saying good-bye to me. However, just as he had made up his mind to exchange into a regiment ordered for foreign service, he met me accidentally at the Army and Navy Stores. He congratulated me on my engagement; there were explanations all round; and if it hadn't been for the disapproving eyes of the young men behind the counter we should have fallen into each other's arms."

"I hope you will live happily ever after," I said, as the little romance came to an end. "And so the fact of having been unhappy yourself makes you sorry for other people, even for Mr. Johnson. But you must allow that there is something rather absurd in the idea of a man of his age and character wanting to marry me. Why, I should have teased his life out; he ought to be deeply grateful to me for refusing him."

"Perhaps he will, some day, but I imagine that at this moment he is feeling supremely lonely and miserable. He has been picturing to himself his dull old Rectory with a young thing like you running about it, bringing flowers into the prim drawing-room, jogging his elbow when he was writing his uninteresting sermons, and listening to his prosy conversation with mingled awe and admiration. Of course he proposed to himself to form your mind; a man always thinks he can form a woman's mind, just as a woman always thinks she can reform a scamp. At this moment he is probably sitting in his arm-chair on one side of the fireplace, and looking at the empty chair on the other side with an almost intolerable yearning for a little girl with grey eyes and pink cheeks. Perhaps he relieves his solitude by fancying that he sees you sitting opposite him, returning his gaze with a——"

"Oh, don't!" I interrupted, beginning to feel rather moved by this imaginary picture of Mr. Johnson's sufferings. "Let us think that he is busy making up the clothing-club accounts, and grumbling because they won't come right. After all,

it would have been more sensible if he had offered to adopt me."

"Yes; but it is a curious fact in human nature that no man can ever realise that he has become elderly and unattractive. However, I don't suppose Mr. Johnson will fret about you long. When a confirmed old bachelor has once let the idea of marriage invade his mind, he will not let one rebuff put him off it. Some one will catch his heart in the rebound. I prophesy that in the course of the next three months we shall hear of the engagement of the Rector of Oaklands to some neighbouring curate's daughter, and you will be able to lay the unflattering unction to your soul that he is just as well satisfied with the new love as he would have been with the old."

"Of course, I shall be delighted if your prophecy comes true," I said, feeling slightly piqued all the same. "But if all love is like that, I don't think much of it."

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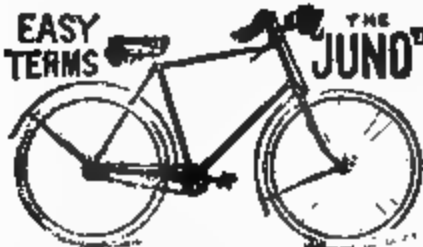
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CHAPTER XVI.

THE slight alteration in Julian of which Marston Loring was conscious, and a subtly evinced consequence of that alteration—namely, that intimacy with the son no longer involved of necessity even an introduction, far less intimacy, at the mother's house—had no effect whatever upon Loring's relation with Mrs. Romaine, unless, indeed, it might be said to emphasize his position as friend of the house. During the three weeks which followed immediately upon his first call after his return to town, he saw at least as much of Mrs. Romaine as he had done in the course of any previous three weeks since Julian's first introduction of him; though the young man was no longer an obvious and tangible link between them. He dined in Queen Anne Street a few days after his return, but except on that occasion it chanced that he hardly ever met Mrs. Romaine and Julian together. He met the latter often enough at one or other of the clubs, or about the Temple. On the former he called, as in duty bound, after the dinner, and again and yet again at short intervals. She had consulted him about a purchase of old oak, with which she wished to surprise Julian, and the purchase seemed to necessitate in his eyes frequent consultation. He also happened to meet her once or twice when she herself was paying calls.

She was always, apparently, pleased to see him. More pronounced, perhaps, when

she met him among other people than when she received him alone, but still always more or less present, there was a certain eager, unconscious assertion of something like intimacy with him about her manner. Marston Loring was quick to observe the new note, and he prided himself likewise on the caution with which he refused to allow it even the value he believed it to possess. He caught her quick recognition of his presence; her tendency to draw him always into the conversation in which she happened to be engaged; the tacit assumption of mutual interests and understanding lurking in her voice; and he sifted and dismissed these things, cynically, as probably meaningless. But astute as he was, he never thought of them in connection with the constant references to Julian; the questions as to Julian's doings; with which her conversations with him were full. Of these latter he took hardly any account—except for an occasional sardonic smile. Clever as he thought himself, there were vast tracts of human nature to which he had no clue, in the very existence of which he disbelieved; consequently, it was not surprising that he should now and then mistake cause for effect.

At about noon on a bright, cold October day he got out of a hansom at twenty-two, Queen Anne Street, with a certain cynical expectancy on his face. The weeks which had passed since Mrs. Romaine and Julian returned to town on that close September day had brought on winter, and had settled winter society fairly into its grooves; and on the previous evening Marston Loring and Mrs. Romaine had met at a dinner-party. Mrs. Romaine had been alone. To enquiries made for her son, and regrets at his absence, she had replied, with a gaiety

which, a little exaggerated even in the first instance, became absolutely feverish as the evening wore on, that he was unfortunately engaged. Throughout the evening, as though some kind of strain were acting upon her self-control, all the characteristics of her demeanour towards Loring had been slightly exaggerated. Loring had detected before he had exchanged two sentences with her that she was not herself; that she was unstrung and nervous; and arguing on totally false premises he had come to a totally false conclusion. She had pressed him restlessly about the commission he was doing for her, and he had twisted it this morning into an excuse for coming to see her when he knew she would be at home.

"It is an unheard-of hour, I know," he said, as she rose to receive him with an exclamation of surprise. "But I want a little more detail, and one or two measurements, before I can execute your orders satisfactorily."

He had seen before she spoke that the weakness of the night before, from whatever cause it had arisen, had passed away; the lines about her face were set into a determined, uncompromising cheerfulness, and her voice as she spoke conveyed the same impression.

"It is more than kind of you, and I am very glad to see you," she said. "I'm always glad to see Julian's friend, you know." The last words with a laugh. "You don't happen to have met him this morning, I suppose?"

Loring signified, without a hint of sarcasm, that it was more common not to meet the man one would wish to meet in the Temple than to meet him, and Mrs. Romaine laughed again.

"I know," she said. "But one gets an absurd impression that men doing the same thing in the same place must be always coming across one another. It's very ridiculous, of course. You and he have always had a knack of finding one another out, though. I suppose you are quite one another's greatest chums, aren't you? Is 'chum' still the word, by-the-bye?"

"I believe so," returned Loring carelessly. "Yes," he continued in a different tone, "I don't know when I've taken to any one as I took to Julian."

There was a little gesture, half mocking, half involuntary, which accepted the words as a personal compliment, and Mrs. Romaine said with a smile:

"You are a curious pair of friends, too, are you not? Julian"—her voice in

uttering the name seemed to have acquired a new tenderness in the past month, and lingered over it now, evidently unconsciously and involuntarily—"Julian is such a boy, and you are—a great deal older than you ought to be."

She shook her head at him with a reproving laugh which was by no means wholly condemnatory, and he answered in his most blasé manner:

"I'm a man of the world, you see. I knew it all through and through before Julian had left school. I hope you wouldn't have preferred another boy for his 'chum'!"

There was a daring and a challenge in his tone which made the question personal rather to himself than to Julian; but Mrs. Romaine took it from the other point of view.

"Quite the contrary!" she said quickly. "Another boy would not have been at all the thing for him. I am delighted to think that his mentor is a wise one. I rely on you, Mr. Loring, do you know!"

She stopped abruptly. The last words, uttered suddenly and involuntarily, had seemed curiously charged with a meaning which could not get itself expressed. She paused an instant and then, half as though she wished to laugh some impression away, half as though she wished the words to have significance, she added:

"You'll remember that, won't you? Shall we go down and see about the fittings?"

She rose as she spoke and led the way down to Julian's room. The room was already as perfect as might be. Only a great restlessness, an irrepressible and incessant impulse to give pleasure to its occupant, could have dictated further improvements, and as Mrs. Romaine talked and explained, the same restless instinct of service expressed itself in sundry little involuntary touches to trifles about the room—about Julian's chair and his writing-table.

The door-bell rang at length, and her face, over which that new and weaker expression had stolen, hardened suddenly.

"I'm afraid I must send you away now!" she said, turning to Loring. "I've made an appointment for this morning to get through some bothering business. You understand now just what I want, though, don't you?"

"I think so!" answered Loring reflectively. It would have been strange indeed if he had not understood by this time. "But I'm sorry I must go!"

"I'm sorry too!" said Mrs. Romayne lightly. "I hate business, and it loses none of its solemnity, I can assure you, when it is transacted by my connexion, Dennis Falconer. He is my trustee, you know!" The words had been uttered with hard brightness, almost as though they held at bay and defied something which could not be so easily mocked at.

Loring smiled. He did not detect anything behind her words, and it struck him always as perfectly natural that Mrs. Romayne and her "connexion" should be somewhat antagonistic. "I should imagine he would be a rather ponderous man of business!" he said.

The parlour-maid entered at this moment to announce that Mr. Dennis Falconer was in the drawing-room, and as she left the room Mrs. Romayne turned again to Loring with her previous tone of confidence and defiance accentuated.

"To tell you the truth I find him rather ponderous at all times!" she said, with a laugh. "Didn't you say once that altitudes were oppressive? Well, I must go and be oppressed!"

She held out her hand as she spoke, and then paused.

"Oh, by-the-bye," she said, "Julian wants you to come and dine one day next week—only he's so much engaged. Which day will suit you?"

"Thanks!" answered Loring. "I shall be charmed!" His face was quite impassive as he spoke, but he was wondering nevertheless whether Julian had as yet heard of the invitation. From what he had observed lately, he fancied that Julian had reasons of his own for avoiding home engagements. "I am engaged on Tuesday and Thursday," he continued, "but on any other day I shall be delighted. Did Julian have a successful evening yesterday?"

Mrs. Romayne had explained to him on the previous night with forced merriment that her son was "dining with a fellow, he says!"

"Yes, I think so!" she answered lightly. "I don't know which 'fellow' it was, you know. Well, then, I will send you a note."

They had moved out into the hall as they talked, and now as she paused at the foot of the stairs he shook hands again, and went out of the house as she turned and went up to the drawing-room. Dennis Falconer was standing waiting by the fire.

"Most punctual of men!" she said airily

as they shook hands. "How do you do?"

Dennis Falconer had by this time had five months of inaction and ill-health, and the fact that he was heartily weary of both by no means served to soften the natural tendency of his manner towards reserve and severity. In settling down to London life for the winter, too, the fact that he was no longer a new lion gave an added tinge of monotony to existence for him, honestly unconscious as he was of this truth. The days went very heavily with him; he was conscious of having come to a dreary bit of his life's journey, and he endured it conscientiously—if with rather self-conscious self-respect. An added gravity and silence seemed to him under the circumstances by no means to be deprecated.

Under these circumstances the contrast between him and Mrs. Romayne as they exchanged the trivialities of the situation was inexpressible, and it was not surprising that they touched almost instantly upon the business which was the cause of their interview. It was not a long affair; it turned upon Mrs. Romayne's desire to have rather more ready money at her command; and Dennis Falconer, having explained the situation to her, having stated his views, evidently conscientiously compelled thereto, and having entered a formal protest against her instructions, returned to his pocket the note-book to which he had been referring as if to emphasize the close of the matter. Then he paused.

Mrs. Romayne had drawn a quick, slight breath of relief at his action, but the breath seemed to suspend itself for an instant on this pause, and the eyes with which she watched his were very bright and intent.

"As your only near relative," he began with formal gravity, "and as your son's only near relative, I feel myself bound to take this opportunity of approaching a subject which has been in my thoughts for some time. Any man of ordinary knowledge and experience of the world, having regard only to the most ordinary circumstances, would tell you that so large an allowance as you make your son is not an advisable thing for any young man."

Mrs. Romayne had listened with her expression veiled and repressed into an intent vigilance, and as he finished a dull flush—which was none the less hot and

significant because it had not the vivid intensity of the angry flush of youth—crept into her face, and her eyes glittered. Her tone as she spoke witnessed to a strong self-control and an intense determination not to abandon her position or to lessen by one jot the distance she had set between them.

"I am sorry you think so!" she said carelessly.

"I think so, emphatically," he returned. "I should think so for any young man. For William Romaine's son——"

Mrs. Romaine had been gathering up some papers from the table with light, careless movements; she rose now rather suddenly but still carelessly. What seemed to him almost shameful callousness quickened Falconer into what he thought a righteous disregard for all conventionality.

He too rose, but his movement was no response to hers; rather it seemed to crush and dominate its suggestion of easy dismissal with the implacable austerity of a reality not to be put aside. He stood looking at her, forcing her, by the suddenly asserted superiority of his man's determination and mental weight, to meet his grave, condemning eyes.

"Does your son know what his father was?" he said in a low, stern voice.

He had forced down the barrier, he had annihilated the distance, and she faced him with glittering eyes, that dull flush all over her face, its mask gone.

"No!" she said, and from her hard, defiant voice also all artificiality had dropped away.

"He knows nothing of his danger; he has no safeguards, and he has money at his command which would be temptation to any young man. Think what you are doing!"

For a couple of seconds they confronted one another, separated by no conventionalities, man and woman, with the common memory of a common horror between them holding them together in spite of every obstacle which temperament and habit, mental and moral, could interpose.

Then with a tremendous effort the woman's strength reasserted itself, and by sheer force of her will she thrust away the horrible reality which he had forced upon her. Her face changed into a sort of artificial mask of gaiety, and she laughed.

"I really don't know what we are talking about!" she said. "I am sure you mean most kindly as to my spoilt boy's

allowance, but we won't trouble to discuss it! So good of you to take the trouble to think of it—and so unnecessary!"

For a moment Falconer gazed at her almost petrified with amazement and disgust. His perceptive and imaginative faculties had not developed with the passing of years; his mental processes were slow; and for all their ghastly exaggeration he accepted the careless, shallow artificiality of her tone and manner, and the smiling unfeelingness of the rebuff she had given him exactly as they appeared upon the surface. It was some seconds, even, before he thoroughly realised how ruthlessly and completely she had imputed to him all the attributes of a meddler, and as he did so an added distance touched the uncompromising sternness which had gradually settled down upon his face.

"I beg your pardon!" he said, and the formal, unmeaning words seemed, in their enforced condescension to her level, to carry with them a lofty condemnation which was even contempt. "Good day!" he added stiffly; and then, not seeing, apparently, the hand she extended to him with a hard, smiling, "Good-bye," he left the room.

Mrs. Romaine's face remained curiously blanched-looking all the afternoon, as though she had received some kind of shock. She spent the afternoon in paying calls, and whenever she returned alone to her carriage there crept back into her eyes—bright and eager as she talked and laughed—a certain haunted questioning, not to be driven quite away by any simulation of gaiety.

As her afternoon's work drew to a close, her eyes were no longer quite free of it, even as she made her bright, attractive conversation, and when she rose to bring her last visit to an end she was looking very tired. She was just shaking hands with her hostess when Mrs. Halse was announced.

To spare herself one iota of what she considered her social duty—even when that duty took the form of civility to a woman she disliked—was not Mrs. Romaine's way. With exactly the exclamation of pleasure and surprise which the situation demanded she waited, pleasantly desirous of exchanging greetings with the new-comer, while Mrs. Halse bore down vociferously upon the mistress of the house. Mrs. Halse had only very recently returned to town, and there was all the excitement of novelty about her appearance.

She was a good deal louder even than usual, partly as the result of this excitement, and partly as the result of absence from town; and she had also grown considerably stouter. Announcements of this fact, lamentations, and explanations mingled with her greetings of her hostess, and were still upon her lips when she turned to Mrs. Romayne.

"Abominable, isn't it?" she said, pouring out her words as fast as they would come, and without waiting for any answers. "Such a trial! I suppose I shall have to go in for Turkish baths or something horrible of that sort. And how is everybody? How is that wicked young man of yours, Mrs. Romayne? I heard of his goings on. By-the-bye, do tell him that Hilda Newton is engaged to be married. So good for him. No doubt he thinks she is pining away. A very good match, too—young Compton; rich and good-looking; rather a fool, but don't tell Master Julian that."

Master Julian's mother was smiling so charmingly that it was with some difficulty that Mrs. Halse, who, with the assistance of Miss Newton, had guessed the substance of the conversation which had actually taken place between the mother and son in the railway carriage during their journey from Norfolk, had some slight difficulty in restraining the ejaculation, "Oat!"

"Really!" was the suave answer. "Miss Newton is really engaged, and so well. So glad! Such a charming girl! Yes, I'll tell Julian, certainly. His heart will be broken—temporarily. Fortunately his fancies are as ephemeral as they are numerous. Good-bye! So glad to have seen you."

She pressed Mrs. Halse's hand cordially as she spoke, and pursued her graceful way to the door.

Julian was dining out again that night, and her lonely evening—or, perhaps, that restless, anxious questioning—apparently affected his mother's nerves. At any rate, Julian received a message the next morning—a Sunday—to the effect that she had slept badly and was resting, but would see him at lunch, and at lunch-time accordingly she appeared.

She laughed at his half-careless, half-affectionate enquiries, calling herself quite rested and quite well. But her nerves were apparently by no means so steady as usual, and there was something unstrung and uncertain about her altogether. After his first enquiries as to her health, Julian

relapsed into rather moody silence—silence with which his mother had apparently nothing to do. That tone of independence which had come to him, and which was sometimes hardly perceptible, could hardly have been more strongly evidenced than by his one or two spasmodic efforts to pass out of his own life—where something was evidently not to his liking—into the life they shared.

Such a state of things is always more or less disturbing to the mental atmosphere—more or less according to the sensitiveness of the person upon whom it acts; and as Mrs. Romayne sat opposite Julian the furtive glances which she cast at his moody, preoccupied face became more and more anxious and restless. A tentative, uncertain tone in her manner of dealing with him, which had developed during the last month, increased moment by moment; and the gaiety of her voice and laugh as she chatted to him—ignoring his indifferent reception of her little bits of news—became moment by moment more forced and unreal. That her nerves and her self-control were not so reliable as they had once been was evident in the fact that she took refuge—as was not unusual with her in these days—in painful exaggeration.

Her bright little flow of talk stopped at last, however; and Julian, making no attempt to fill the gap, there was total silence. It was broken again by Mrs. Romayne, and she was talking now, evidently, for talking's sake, as though she was no longer capable of weighing her words, but, in her intense desire to penetrate the vague atmosphere which she could not challenge, was making her advances blindly.

"I met Mrs. Halse yesterday," she began gaily. "Did I tell you? Fortunately I only encountered her for a few moments, or I doubt whether I should be alive to tell the tale."

She paused, and Julian smiled absently. They had finished lunch, and he had risen and strolled to the fire with a cigarette, and he was thinking vaguely, as her voice broke in upon his meditations—or perhaps rather feeling than thinking—that his mother was rather artificial. All society women were artificial, he had thought once or twice lately; and the word was acquiring a new significance to him.

"She bestowed an immense amount of conversation upon me in the course of those few minutes!" continued Mrs. Ro-

mayne in the sprightly tone which her son was beginning to hear for the first time as something jarring. "Amongst other things, she told me a little piece of news which will interest you."

"Yes?" said Julian indifferently.

A fellow didn't always want to be entertained, he was saying to himself irritably; it was a nuisance. His thoughts had wandered completely, and he was going over a fruitless hour which he had spent alone walking up and down a certain side-street off Piccadilly, on the previous evening—an hour which was accountable for his gloomy humour this morning—when he became aware of his mother's voice saying with insistent gaiety:

"Well, sir, aren't you broken-hearted?"

Julian started and made a futile effort to realise what his mother had said. The necessity for the effort and its failure proved by no means soothing to him, and he said rather impatiently:

"I'm awfully sorry, mother, but I'm afraid I didn't hear."

"He didn't hear!" echoed Mrs. Romaine in mock appeal to heaven and earth to witness the fact. She, too, had made an effort and a failure, and the result with her was to increase her nervous recklessness. "Five weeks ago he was ready to eat his poor little mother because she prevented his proposing to this young woman, and now when I tell him she's engaged he doesn't even hear! Perhaps you've forgotten Hilda Newton's very existence, my lord! Who is her successor?"

Julian flushed angrily, and his good-looking face took a sullen expression.

"She's not likely to have a successor, as you call it," he said. "A fellow doesn't care to have that kind of thing happen twice."

His mother broke into a thin, nervous laugh.

"You don't mean to say it rankles still!" she said gaily. "Is this the reason of your devotion to work and 'fellows'? You silly old boy, you ought to be thoroughly glad of your escape by this time! I think I shall follow Dennis Falconer's advice, and cut down your allowance to teach you reason. Shall I?"

The jest, dragged in as it was, had a forced ring about it; perhaps it bore all unconscious testimony to the oppressively insistent power of that haunting questioning. But Julian, knowing nothing of

this, was simply conscious of ever-increasing irritation from her voice and manner.

"I don't see what business my allowance is of Dennis Falconer's!" he said gruffly. And then side by side with his growing sense of his mother's artificiality, there grew in him an overmastering desire for another woman's presence—a simple presence, to whom social subtleties and affectation were unknown. Why hadn't Clemence met him yesterday evening? How could he tell when he would see her again? To-morrow he could not meet her. Then his reflections paused, as it were, absorbed in a vague sense of discomfort and discontent, until a fresh thought stole across them—a thought which presented itself by no means for the first time that day.

Why should he not go and see her this afternoon? After all, why should he not? He never had done such a thing, but—did it mean so much as it seemed to mean? And if it did? Why not?

"I don't see either," his mother said; and Julian smiled grimly as he thought how little she knew the question she was answering. "It's our business, isn't it? And it's my private business to find you a nice wife—not yours at all, you understand." These last words with a laugh. "She must be pretty, I suppose—good style at any rate—and she must be rich, and she must have the makings of a good hostess in her. Really, I think I must begin to look her out. Don't you think——"

Julian interrupted her. He was hardly conscious that he was doing so; he had hardly heard her words; but the atmosphere of the perfectly appointed room, with its artificial mistress, had suddenly become absolutely intolerable to him, and he had answered his own question suddenly and recklessly.

"I'm going out, mother," he said. "I've got some calls to make, and it's getting late. You won't go out this afternoon, I know. Good-bye."

He was gone almost before she had realised that he was going.

To Mrs. Romaine it was a repetition of their first evening at home together in the autumn. The nervous excitement under which she had been acting died suddenly away, and she realised what had happened—realised it, and sat for a moment staring at it, as it were, her hands clenched on the tablecloth, her face haggard and drawn.

To Julian it was no repetition. It was a new departure, sudden and unpremeditated, and as he walked away from his mother's home, his face was alight and eager with excitement and determination.

IMPERIAL DINNERS.—I.

ROMAN DINNERS. FROM THE RISE OF THE EMPIRE TO ITS DECLINE AND FALL.

JULIUS CÆSAR had all a hero's indifference to the pleasures of dining; but they were fully appreciated by Pompey, and by Mark Antony, for whom Cleopatra prepared, we know, some magnificent banquets. You remember her much talked-about exploit of dissolving in vinegar her finest pearls.

Mark Antony lives for us in one of the noblest of Shakespeare's dramas. The poet does not forget the voluptuous side of the great Roman's character, nor is it kept out of sight by Dryden in his tragedy of "All for Love." He was a "bon vivant," this soldier of fortune, of the first quality; a connoisseur in rare dishes and strong wines. At times, it is true, he seemed to relish the coarsest fare; and he gained a vast popularity in the army by sitting down with the common soldiers when they were taking their dinners, or eating off their tables. But this was mere matter of policy. During his retreat from Italy he set a brave example to his followers, drinking without a murmur of the foulest water, and feeding on wild fruits and roots. Afterwards, in the midst of Asiatic luxury, he amply compensated himself for this enforced abstemiousness; and on one occasion dined so well that he rewarded his cook with the present of a fine house—which belonged to somebody else. When Cleopatra arrived in Cilicia with her charms and artifices, she invited the great Roman to dinner. He went, he saw, and was conquered. The meal was of the costliest and richest description; but the peacocks, and the geese, and the wheaten bread, and the wines did not so much astonish him as the splendour of the lights; for all on a sudden was lowered from the ceiling a number of branches with lights attached to them, so skilfully disposed, some in squares, and some in circles, that the whole spectacle was one of indescribable beauty.

The dinners which Antony and Cleopatra gave in Alexandria seem to have been almost unrivalled for profusion. A

certain Phildas, who had some acquaintance with the chief cook, was invited by him to come and see the sumptuous preparations; and his account of what he saw has been handed down to posterity. In the kitchen he admired the prodigious variety of all things; and, seeing eight wild boars being roasted whole before huge fires which glowed like furnaces, he naturally remarked: "Surely you have a large company to-day!" The cook laughed at his simplicity. "No," he said, "covers are laid only for twelve, but every dish must be served up just roasted to a turn. If it is but a single minute overdone or underdone, it is spoiled. Now, it may be that Antony will dine this moment; maybe an hour hence; he may call for wine, or begin to talk, and put it off; so that it is not one, but several dinners which must be held in readiness, since it is impossible to know when Antony will give the order." Which reminds us of the fowls Napoleon's cook was obliged to keep on the spit, in order that one might always be served up when his capricious master chose to dine.

There was a memorable dinner which Pompey—let us rather say Pompeius; it sounds more dignified—gave to Antony, Lepidus, and Octavius Cæsar on board his flagship—a great galley of six banks of oars, lying off Misenum—to celebrate the peace concluded between the confederates. The *ménau* has not been preserved, but no doubt it did credit to the hospitality of the host and the skill of his cooks.

Pompeius, unlike most of the great Romans of his time, kept a moderate table; and Plutarch notes, as one of his characteristics, that when he had invited his friends to dinner, he was carefully polite in waiting until all had arrived and were conveniently seated. From the circumstance that Plutarch thinks this commonplace act of courtesy worthy of special notice, we may assume, I suppose, that it was not ordinarily practised by the Roman dinner-givers.

The ostentatious extravagance of Lucullus has made his name a by-word. One of the Stoics, surveying his magnificent buildings at Naples, his immense gardens, the moats and fish-ponds supplied with seawater, the pavilions surrounded by shining streams, called him "Xerxes in a gown." His every-day dinners, not less than his special entertainments, were attended with all the luxurious additions of purple coverlets, and plate adorned with precious

stones, dances, and interludes, besides exhibiting the greatest diversity of dishes and the most elaborate cookery. When Pompeius was lying ill, and his physician ordered him a thrush for his dinner, his servants reminded him that in the summer thrushes were to be found nowhere but in the fattening coops of Lucullus. He prided himself on this excess. Having feasted several Greeks who had come to see the wonders of Rome, they grew ashamed of accepting the daily invitations which, as they supposed, put him to so much additional expense; he observed, with a smile: "Some of it, indeed, my Achæans, is for your sake, but more for that of Lucullus." Once when he dined alone, and only one course was set before him, he called his steward and rebuked him, and when he excused himself on the ground that no guests had been invited, loftily replied: "Did you not know, then, that to-day Lucullus dines with Lucullus?" This answer coming to the ears of Cicero and Pompeius, they, on meeting him soon afterwards in the Forum, jestingly asked him whether the time was propitious for asking a favour of him. "Unquestionably," said he. "Then," rejoined Cicero, "let us dine with you to-day on the dinner that has been prepared for yourself alone." Lucullus asked for a day's delay; but no, they would not grant it, nor would they allow him to speak with his servants, lest he should order additional courses. All they would concede was, that he might tell them, before their faces, that to-day he would sup in the Apollo chamber. And in this way he outwitted them; for every room, it seems, had its own assessment of expenditure, dinner at such a price, and all things in accordance; so that his servants, on being informed where he would dine, knew how much was to be spent, and in what style and form dinner was to be served. The sum allowed for the Apollo was no less than fifty thousand drachmas. Cicero and Pompeius, however, were not so much surprised by the greatness of the cost as by the rapidity of the outlay. Anybody could spend fifty thousand drachmas if time were given him, but to spend it in a few hours was a task worthy of a Lucullus.

He was something more than an epicure; he was genuinely fond of letters; read much, and profited by what he read; could hold his own in philosophical discussions; and having collected a magnificent library,

placed it at the disposal of the public. So that he is fairly entitled to the honour of having established the first Free Library.

Horace, when his health permitted, was as great a diner-out as the poet Moore. There is a reference to his proclivity in this direction in one of Augustus's letters to Mæcenas, whom he wishes to deprive of his guest: "Let him leave your table where he dines as a parasite, that he may attend at the palace as secretary and amanuensis." In his Odes the poet refers to the great Minister's "sumptuous board." "For thee," he says, "the Cæcuban overflows, with all that is distilled by the wine-presses of Cales." But Horace was equally fond of playing the host, though the fare he provided, as he tells Mæcenas, was of frugal character, with no rare Falerian or costly Cæcuban to wash it down, only old Sabine wine in modest cups; though, to be sure, what go better together than old wine and old friends? Probably he also gave him of those "fat olives of his fields," those "shards and mallows"—"the unbought dainties of the poor"—of which he sings in one of his Epodes. But no garlic; if Mæcenas sometimes partook of that ill-smelling plant, Horace hated it fervently as "worse than aconite." At his Sabine farm he would entertain others of the choice company of his friends: Plotius, Lollius, Munatius Plancus, Caius, Ballatius, and Aristius Fuscus, who was as fond of urban as Horace of rural pleasures—"urbis amator," the poet calls him. Among his "Epistolæ" occurs a charming invitation to Torquatus—"Si potes Archiacis conviva recumbere lectis"—to join him in doing honour to the birthday of Augustus. He also offered "a dish of pot-herbs," but it goes without saying that there were viands more dainty, and also more substantial; together with wine such as the vintages between Minturnæ and Petrinum, "stored in Augustus's second year." All things, he says, shall be trim and nice my guest to meet. The hearth well burnished, and the sideboard neat. Every couch and cloth shall be free from dust; every dish and cup so polished as to reflect each friendly face, and the company well-assorted—Batra, Septicius, and Sabrinus. On another occasion he invites Corvinus to taste some mellow wine which is as old as himself. On another, Petilius is his boon-companion, and on yet another he asks a friend, whose name he omits to mention, to come and partake of that famous old wine of his.

One would have liked to have dined with Horace, Virgil, and Mæcenas, on that celebrated journey from Rome to Brundisium which forms the subject of Horace's fifth satire in his first book—either at Sinuessa, or Capua, or best of all, at Cocceius's farm.

One would have liked the dinner with Augustus Imperator, and the two great poets of his time, when he pleasantly remarked that he sat like Tragedy between sighs and tears, Virgil suffering from a difficulty of breathing, and Horace being afflicted with weak eyes. I know not what good things may have been eaten, but I am sure that many good things were said.

Augustus, unlike some of his successors, drank with moderation, perhaps because he was constitutionally incapable of excess. Suetonius says that he never took more than a quart—the reader will remember that the wine was well diluted with water—or if he did, his stomach immediately rejected it. The wine he liked best was the Setine—grown on the heights of Sezza—and according to Silius Italicus, fit for Bacchus himself.* His favourite comestibles were brown bread, green cheese, and green figs, and he refreshed his palate with a juicy apple, a slice of cucumber, a lettuce, or bread dipped in water. Like Napoleon, he ate when he felt hungry, and did not trouble himself to wait for the regular dinner-hour. For his guests he invariably chose men who had something to say, and knew how to say it—except when he invited Tegellius, who would not sing when wanted, and when not wanted sang for hours, now in shrill treble, now in thundering bass; a book of the imperial dinner talk would have made excellent reading. He had a fine appreciation of a jest, even if it glanced at himself. But he had a bad habit of not appearing at dinner until it was half over, and a worse one, of leaving the table before it was half ended.

Let us pass on to Tiberius, the nephew and successor of Augustus. He, too, was—in the opinion of the Romans—a moderate eater. Broccoli was one of his favourite dishes, and as his son Drusus was not less partial to it, a right royal quarrel always broke out when the slaves placed it on the table before them. He was as fond of melons as Robespierre was of oranges, perhaps for the same reason—as a corrective of bile. He had a way of his own of

encouraging literary effort; and rewarded Asellius Sabinus with ten thousand pounds for a dialogue in which he had defined the characteristic qualities of thrushes, beccaficoes, mushrooms, and oysters. As a protest against the luxurious habits of the patricians, he sometimes dined in public on cold beef—which, with pickles, is by no means an unsatisfactory dish. His enemies alleged that he more than made up for his moderation in eating by his excess in a different direction, and the wits of the barracks punned his names, Tiberius Claudius Nero, into Biberius Caldus Mero—just as we might turn Soper into Toper. He once raised a man to the post of quæstor, because he emptied a three-pint cyathus of wine at a draught. This was an exploit the Emperor himself could not imitate; but, on the other hand, he could run his forefinger through a raw green apple as a maid runs her needle into a pincushion. He had an inconvenient custom of jesting at table, putting queries which were worse than conundrums; as for instance, What was the subject of the song which the Sirens sang to Odysseus? or, What was the name of Hecuba's mother? He loved argument, but not to be beaten at it; and the too successful disputant was immediately bidden to retire and perform the happy despatch. A dinner with Tiberius evidently had its serious side; but if a man argue with Cæsar, what can he expect for his pains?

A couple of notable dinners took place in this reign.

Agrippina, widow of the illustrious Germanicus, and niece of Tiberius, resided under the latter's roof, as was the habit with princes and princesses of the blood imperial. On special occasions she was invited to her uncle's table; but as she had been led to believe that he sought an opportunity of poisoning her, she invariably refused every dish that was offered, and this without attempting explanation or apology. Tiberius observed her action, and guessed its motive. To satisfy himself, he handed her some apples which he said were of exceptionally fine flavour. Greatly alarmed, she passed them on, untasted, to her attendants. Whereupon Tiberius turned to his mother and murmured, that none could wonder at any apparent harshness in his conduct towards a person who so openly proclaimed her conviction that he meditated her death.

After his retirement to Capua, he one

* It is also praised by Martial and Juvenal.

day invited his friends to a picnic in the cool recesses of a Campanian grotto. During the talk and laughter the cavern roof suddenly yielded, covering the tables and the guests with its débris. In the midst of the confusion Sejanus, his minister and favourite, threw himself across his master's prostrate form, and bending like an arch, protected him, by a prolonged effort of his immense strength, from the clashing, clattering fragments—an act of devotion which Tiberius did not fail to reward.

To the reign of Tiberius belongs the famous epicure, Apicius, whose name has acquired a typical celebrity.

There would seem to have dwelt in Rome, at different epochs, three votaries of the culinary art who bore this well-known name. The first lived under the Republic, in the days of Sulla; the second in the reign of Tiberius; the third in that of Trajan. But the true Apicius (Marcus Gaius)—to whom Pliny, Seneca, Martial, and Juvenal so frequently allude—was the second; and it was he who crowned himself with immortal glory by discovering the means of preserving oysters alive. It was he who sailed from place to place in quest of the toothsomest lobsters—as adventurous as Sir Galahad, though on a different mission.

This sublime epicure began his career of sensuality with a fortune of about a million sterling. On his gastronomic pleasure he spent seven hundred and twenty thousand pounds. One day he took it into his head to balance his books. Horror! He found his capital reduced to eighty thousand pounds, and rather than starve on such a trifle, retired to his bath and opened his veins. This is no fiction; it is recorded by both Seneca and Dion Cassius, and is the theme of one of Martial's epigrams.

Most writers are of opinion that the culinary treatise, "*De Re Culinaria*," edited by Dr. Lister, which bears his name, was really written by a certain Cœlius, who assumed the pseudonym of Apicius for obvious reasons.

The historian of the Cæsars has recorded some anecdotes of Caligula which make us wonder whether he was really human. Throwing his arms round his mistress's white neck, he chuckled over the secret reflection that whenever he chose he could give it to the executioner's knife. When the Consuls ventured to enquire why he broke out into sudden laughter at a public entertainment, he cheerfully replied: "It

was at the thought that with a wave of my hand I could cut all your heads off." But he gave splendid dinners, and his "lecti" were never empty; to be sure, one can hardly refuse an invitation to dinner if it has come from the master of many legions. It must have been a relief to the courtiers when the officers of the prætorian guards put the monster to death, and no more "commands" were issued by Caius Cæsar—nicknamed "Caligula"—and a relief to the senators, whom he had been wont to compel to act as waiters at his imperial feasts.

It is told of him that, on one occasion, having given a gorgeous dinner to the citizens, he was so pleased with the enormous appetite of a certain knight that he sent to him his own plate; and a senator who showed a like appreciation of the luxuries set before him was straightway appointed to the office of a Prætor.

"Among the tasteless extravagances of the day," says Dean Merivale, "there were none to which the vulgar rich more commonly devoted themselves than that of the table. It was not so much their ambition to surround themselves with the most graceful or gorgeous appliances of luxury, with richly furnished chambers, with exquisite music, with couches and tables of costly materials and elaborate workmanship, though all these too had their votaries, as to amaze their guests with the extraordinary money value of the articles they managed to consume. It was for their rarity only that nightingales and peacocks, and the tongues and brains of phoenixes, whatever those creatures may be, were regarded as delicacies; still less could it give any pleasure to the palate to swallow pearls dissolved in powerful acids. But such was the rampant luxury of Caligula, in which he strove to imitate, or rather to outdo the Oriental Cleopatra. In this and other particulars of the same kind he succeeded probably in surpassing all previous examples; he contrived, we are assured, to expend the amount of eighty thousand pounds on a single repast; and, having effected this, he could say complacently, 'A man should be frugal unless he be a Cæsar.'" [Such is the relation of Suetonius.]

The Emperor Claudius was an unconscionable, an almost incredible glutton. He gorged until in danger of suffocation; when an attendant tickled his throat with a feather, and he was soon ready to begin again. One day, when receiving petitions

in the Forum, he suddenly sprang from his seat, and rushed into the Temple of Mars, attracted by the smell of the roast meat on which the priests were dining. Sitting down uninvited, he played his part like a man. His hospitality, however, was never at fault, and frequently as many as six hundred guests reclined around the imperial tables. Mushrooms were one of his favourite relishes, and proved fatal to him; at the instigation of the Empress Agrippina, Halotus, one of the slaves of the palace, and taster of the imperial viands, concealed a dose of poison in a dish of those delicacies. Its action was assisted by Xenophon, the physician, who thrust a poisoned feather down the wretch's throat on the pretext of assisting him to vomit.

Be it said, however, to the credit of this imperial glutton, that he raised that most useful and palatable vegetable, the cabbage, out of the discredit in which it had lain for centuries, through his partiality for salt pork. "Conscript fathers," said he one day, on entering the senate, "tell me, I pray you, 'is it possible for man to live without salt pork?'" And the venerable company replied immediately: "Better die than live without it." And from that moment, to pay court to Claudius, the senators waxed fat upon salt pork and cabbage.

Galba almost bore away the palm for voracity from Claudius; he ate and drank incessantly from morning to night. But he was as mean as he was voracious. When Canus, a famous musician, played to him one day at dinner, he expressed his approbation, but rewarded him with only a few gold pieces.

Of Otho it will be enough to say that he entertained Nero and his mother Agrippina at a splendid banquet, when the Emperor had resolved on the commission of matricide.

The beastly Vitellius, as Gibbon calls him, spent at least six millions of money on table in about as many months. He invented, or his cook invented for him, a dish which he designated "The Shield of Minerva." One of its principal ingredients was flamingoes' tongues, of which, I may add, both Pliny and Martial speak in encomiastic terms. Dampier says that the flamingoes have "large tongues, and near the root is a piece of fat, which is accounted a great dainty." When Captain Owen was surveying the east coast of Africa, his sailors shot down hundreds of these beautiful birds, in order—with an

extravagance worthy of Vitellius—to make a dish of the tongues alone.

To the pen of Juvenal, in his fourth satire, we owe the story of Domitian's Council of the Turbot. This Emperor is represented as summoning to his villa on the Alban hill the members of the imperial council—the grave councillors whom he hated—"quis odorat illi." Pale with anxiety, they hastened at once to obey the tyrant's command. Pegasus the prefect, Fuscus, Crispus, the Glabrios, father and son, all were there, wondering what deadly caprice had roused them at dead of night, or what danger threatened the empire. While they waited for admission, the imperial servitors, carrying aloft a huge turbot which had been sent to the Emperor, passed solemnly in; and the councillors, on their introduction into the presence, found that the question to be submitted to their consideration was simply, whether this monster fish should be cut up into pieces, or served whole on a huge platter specially constructed for it. With due expressions of wonder and admiration, they decided for the platter, and went away rejoicing that their lives were still secure.

On another occasion, having made a great feast for the citizens, he resolved to follow it with a dinner to some of the highest of the Roman nobility. Accordingly, he fitted up—says Dion—an apartment all in black. Black was the ceiling, black the pavement; black were the walls, and black also the bare stone seats or "lecti." The guests were ushered in at night, unattended; and on taking their seats each saw at the head of his couch a column like a tombstone, on which his name was engraven, with a cresset lamp above it, such as was then in use for tombs. Presently a troop of naked boys, with blackened faces, entered, and danced around with horrid motions prior to offering them such "funeral baked meats" as were formerly set apart for the dead. The guests sat silent and terror-stricken, expecting every moment to be put to death; and this the more because Domitian broke the stillness by solemn utterances on things pertaining to the future state of the departed. But when he had sufficiently enjoyed his ghastly jest, and played with the apprehensions of his victims, he dismissed them to their homes, presenting each with the silver cup and platter he had used in the gloomy "cœna," and with the slave, duly washed and apparelled, who

had waited upon him. I doubt, though, whether cup, platter, and slave compensated the sufferer for the terrible fright he had undergone.

Trajan did not give dinners on a scale worthy of commemoration; but one day every month he practised Sir Wilfrid Lawson's panacea—total abstinence—the only virtue, perhaps, that Trajan did not practise.

When Hadrian adopted Ælius Verus as his successor in the imperial purple, he secured the assent of his soldiers by inviting them to a magnificent dinner which cost, it is said, two million pounds—the most costly on record.

He was succeeded by Titus Antoninus Pius, who, by his wisdom and virtue, fully deserved the flattering designation attached to his name. He enjoyed with moderation the innocent pleasures of society; kept a good but not an extravagant table; and cared less for the dishes upon it than for the friends around it.

The philosophic spirit of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the best and greatest of the Roman Emperors, despised the indulgences of the appetite. To a writer upon dinners and dining he has bequeathed no materials for comment; but his memory was revered by a grateful posterity as that of a ruler distinguished by his unfailing beneficence and inflexible justice, and with this we must be content. He had mastered the principles of the Stoics, and he applied them in his daily life. In his early manhood he had had the felicity of being trained under the eye of Antoninus Pius, who taught him not to be "curious about what he ate." The two princes often shared the simple festivities of the vintage. "I have dined," says Aurelius, "on a little bread." . . . "We perspired a great deal, shouted a great deal, and left some gleanings of the vintage hanging on the trellis-work." In the "Meditations" which he wrote in his scanty hours of imperial leisure, he speaks of the fine dishes served up by the cook in a tone calculated to fill with disgust a Vitellius or a Claudius: "When we have meat and similar dishes before us we receive the impression that this is the dead body of a fish, and that the dead body of a bird, and that other the dead body of a pig. And again: that this Falernian is only a little grape-juice; and this purple robe some sheep's wool dyed with the blood of a shell-fish; such, then, are these impressions, and they reach the things themselves and penetrate them, and so we

see what kind of things they are." Dead body of a pig! Dead body of a bird! Shade of Apicius! Thus can a philosopher think and write of the triumphs of thy beloved art!

The sole fault one can attribute to Aurelius is that he was the father of Commodus, who unhappily inherited the vices of his beautiful but profligate mother, Faustina. Marcus Aurelius watched with anxious care over the education of his son, and if he suspected him of weakness, died in ignorance of his worst vices. These were developed, perhaps, by the possession of unbounded power, and by the evil communications of his corrupt attendants and courtiers. A quenchless thirst of blood and an excessive addiction to "the pleasures of the table" became his two most marked characteristics. At his sumptuous dinners his guests must have eaten and drunk with fear, since no one could conjecture who would be the next victim of his capricious cruelty. At length his two chief vices, by a just stroke of Nemesis, put a close to his career. At a "cœna" to which he had invited Marcia, Eclectus, his chamberlain, and Lætus, his prætorian prefect, Marcia, while he leaned on her bosom, presented to him a cup of poisoned wine. Feeling heavy with sleep he withdrew to his chamber; where, while he was struggling with the effects of poison and drunkenness, a wrestler, hired for the purpose, entered and strangled him. Surely, this last "cœna" of a Roman Emperor might supply a great artist with a subject for his canvas!

Both Dion Cassius and Capitolinus chronicle the frugality of the dinners given by Pertinax; but they were attended by the most virtuous members of the Roman senate, and the dishes, if plain, were agreeably seasoned by pleasant talk. The public finances had been crippled by the extravagance of his predecessor, and he adopted a rigid economy in order to recruit them—selling the gold and silver plate which had formerly adorned the imperial table.

Pertinax was slain by the prætorian guards one day as he was preparing for his simple repast. The rude soldiers then put up to auction the Roman world, proclaiming that it was at the disposal of the highest bidder. Oidius Julianus, a wealthy senator, was dining at the time with his wife and daughter, his freedmen and parasites. At their instigation, on hearing of this infamous offer he started up, leaving

his goblet half full, hastened to the prætorian camp, and purchased the prize for a sum which gave two hundred pounds to every soldier. A military procession conducted him to the palace, where the first objects that struck his eyes were the headless body of his predecessor and the frugal entertainment which had been prepared for him. The one he regarded with indifference, the other with contempt. He ordered a magnificent feast to be got ready without delay, and amused himself with dice, and the performances of Pylades, a dancer, until a late hour.

THE REPORTER OF THE "EVENING DESPATCH."

HE was a mild-looking man, with pale, sandy hair, and round, prominent blue eyes. He had a slight impediment in his speech, which, when he was agitated in any way, amounted to a positive stammer, and, as he often mournfully remarked himself, "turned people against him in a manner which you wouldn't believe unless you saw it." The clothes that hung limply about his lean, drooping figure were not of a description to lead the ordinary spectator to imagine that "reporting" was a very paying affair. A friend of mine once hit off the man to the very life by describing him as "rather cabby about the knees."

This general seediness followed him in other things besides his clothes. He had a seedy home, a seedy wife, and a seedy baby. But he was not an unhappy man. He was intensely proud of all three.

My acquaintance with him began on the golfing links of the seaside town of Brunton—as scandal-mongering, gossiping, malicious a little place as ever existed on the face of the earth, but fair enough externally, and therefore satisfying to the summer visitor who goes there only for his holiday. Golf resembles love in this—that it levels all ranks; and seeing him prowling about forlornly one morning with a seedy-looking case of golf-clubs under his arm, I hailed him, and asked him if he would care to go the round with me, as my friend had not turned up. He accepted with eager gratitude, and we started playing.

I have heard it suggested lately by one who should know all about it, that the more brains one has the worse one plays golf, and the lower one's intelligence, with

the more skill does one wield one's club. If this statement is true, then was the reporter of the "Evening Despatch" the most brainless of men. It was soothing to me afterwards to remember that some of my strokes that afternoon must have been strokes of genius, but the reflection gave me no pleasure at the time.

The way the reporter of the "Evening Despatch" played golf was a revelation to me. Science was brought into display at every stroke he took. The game transformed the man. His eyes shone, his stooping figure straightened itself, and the general look of dejection died away from his face. For the moment he rose above me, dwelt in a higher sphere where social distinctions are unknown.

In short, the man could "golf." We played the homeward course in utter silence. I am considered a good-tempered man, but golf is a game that provokes an evil spirit even in a saint, and the rapt, exalted air of absorption on that reporter's face was too much for me.

As he "putted" his ball carefully into the "home" hole, I remarked drily, as I pocketed my ball:

"I should have liked to have had another game with you some day, but you are far too good for me."

The exalted look died out of his face, and the old dejected one came in its place.

"Oh, don't say that, sir," he said. "It has been such a pleasure to me. I so seldom get any one who will play with me."

Brunton is pre-eminently vulgar and snobbish, and dislikes to recognise anything worthy of its notice in any one under a duke or a marquis. I dislike snobbishness, and have always upheld humility as one of the most pleasing of the virtues.

So I walked home in public by the side of the reporter of the "Evening Despatch," and discoursed with him affably on men and things in the sight of all the well-dressed aristocracy of the place.

In the course of the conversation I discovered that—naturally—his one object in life was to gain new ideas. The "Evening Despatch" supplied him with meagre butter to his meagre bread, and he was bound hand and foot to its chariot wheels, and a very Juggernaut it proved to the poor fellow, as will be seen hereafter.

Gossip and sensation he must secure if he wanted to live, and he sought eagerly

and on all occasions for it. He hunted this phantom when he went to church; he pursued it on the links; he followed in the wake of the lovely and fashionable in the hope of securing some scented scandal.

"You see, sir," he said apologetically, "there's so seldom a murder or anything really striking done here, that it's rather hard on a man to have to write a column a day about nothing."

It would have landed me in a lunatic asylum; but I did not tell him so. I parted with him on friendly terms, and flippantly suggested that I should devote some time that evening to praying that a murder at the very least might take place before we next met.

However, as it happened, I did not see him for two or three days. When I did, it was in the evening, just about the time that the "Despatch" would be coming out. I observed that he wore an air of mild cheerfulness, as though all things had gone well with him. He did not notice me until I was quite close to him; he was, amongst other things, a little short-sighted.

"Well," said I in a tone of light banter, "you look as if you had found a tragedy of some kind to fill your column with this evening."

"Well, hardly that, sir," he answered mildly; "but I had a bit of luck in the news line to-day. You mustn't think me unfeeling, sir," he added apologetically. "It's all in the way of business, you know. And I've my wife and the bairns to think of."

He beamed at me fatuously as he mentioned these seedy possessions of his.

I turned—we had been standing still—and walked alongside of him over the links. The sea air blew fresh and strong; the coarse sand-grown grass felt soft to our feet. He looked invigorated, and I felt so.

"Well, and what's the news?" I asked.

"I was going by Ford's Cottages to-day, as luck would have it," he answered, "and I heard there was a case of small-pox there. I went in next door to make enquiries and heard the doctor had been there that day. I don't know that the disease is actually decided yet," he added cheerfully, "but I've worked up a beautiful article on it. 'Small-pox in Brunton,' in big type, you know, and sprinklings of small headings in the American style here and there."

I stopped, absolutely thunderstruck at

the man's folly. The strong, sweet air that had been as wine to me but a moment before, now seemed to choke me. I grasped him firmly by the arm.

"Is there time to stop that article from being printed?" I asked him quietly.

He stared at me.

"Why, no," he said. "They're just crying it out now. Listen!"

And sure enough, from the far distance, we heard the faint, shrill, unmusical tones of the newsboys wafted to us where we stood.

"Evening Despa-a-a-tch."

I dropped his arm.

"Nothing can save you now," I said gloomily. "Don't you see what a fool you've been?"

But he didn't see, and appeared rather hurt. So I explained the situation to him very shortly. I did not speak long, but he was white to the lips when I had finished.

"Don't you see what you've done?" I demanded sternly. "You've spoilt the whole of the season for every soul in Brunton! Why, twenty-four hours after this scare has got about, half the town will have packed up and gone elsewhere! Do you suppose fine London ladies come here to have their pretty faces spoilt by disease?"

His jaw had fallen, and he was looking at me almost vacantly.

"Your editor will dismiss you," I went on, avoiding his glance, "for having made a fool of him, and the doctor who is attending the case will have something to say to you, too, for dragging him into the matter. What do you suppose the people who let lodgings will feel towards you for rumouring abroad that pestilence is in their midst? You've ruined them and you've ruined yourself!"

I left him, a limp, cowering mass of humanity, with actual tears standing in his weak, blue eyes. The man was a fool and could do nothing for himself. I was sorry for him, and did what I could to get him out of the scrape by sending off a paragraph post-haste to the morning papers contradicting the report, and asserting on medical evidence that the case was merely one of chicken-pox.

The report, therefore, did not do so much harm as it might have done. Only a few of the very nervous and panic-stricken left the place, and the affair blew over.

But the reporter was doomed. The whole

place silently and maliciously boycotted him when he had been dismissed from his post as reporter. He could get on the staff of no other paper. Editors eyed him with a sarcastic curl of the lip when he humbly applied to them for work.

"Oh, you were the reporter of the 'Evening Despatch,' they would say, leaning back and surveying the poor starved-looking wretch before them with editorial dignity. "Ah, yes. I'm afraid we have no work to suit you just at present."

As for the doctor, on whose authority the unfortunate man had asserted the disease to be small-pox, he exacted a written apology, and kicked him out of his house as soon as he had penned it into the bargain. The doctor was a spiteful and malicious bully, for no real harm had been done him. But the man was down, and so he kicked him, after the fashion of all bullies.

I left Brunton, and did not return there for some months. I had almost forgotten the reporter whose foolish mistake had brought about such tragic consequences, but as it happened, the first person I met on the links was the man himself.

He was hanging about with a forlorn, broken-down air, and his eyes looked weaker and paler than ever. His clothes were seedier even than of yore, and his air that of a man who has suddenly given up the struggle and succumbed to fate. He looked old, and weary, and broken down.

I went up to him and asked him cheerily how he was.

"You must come and have a round with me," I said briskly. "I have not forgotten how splendidly you play."

To my surprise he coloured scarlet and looked miserable.

"I don't think you'd care to play with me now, sir," he said quietly; "but I shall be very glad if you will let me carry your clubs for you. I'm a 'caddy' now, you know; but low as I am," he added bitterly, "they won't be satisfied till they see me lower yet. It isn't everybody who will employ me even to carry their clubs for them."

Of course I engaged the poor wretch on the spot, and during the few mornings we spent together I learnt the history of his wrongs.

Nobody would speak to him, nobody

would employ him. A slow system of torture was pursued which was literally persecuting the man to death. As I looked at his white, hopeless face I secretly agreed with him when he said with a melancholy smile, that "it would not be for long now."

I asked him why he did not leave the place, but he shook his head. He had never lived anywhere else, and he knew his time was near, and he should like to be buried with his "folk."

"It's hard on Jeanie and the bairnie," he added patiently. "She doesn't like me to be a caddy, but it's the only thing I can do now to keep us from starving. Sometimes a stranger will employ me, but it's little we get to live on through the winter."

My blood boiled at this history of real martyrdom. But what could I do? I helped him as far as I was able; but when I left Brunton once more, it was with the firm conviction that the reporter of the "Evening Despatch" and I had met for the last time on earth.

And I was right. On my next visit I found the grass growing green over his humble grave, and his widow married again.

He was one of those silent victims of man's unforgiving brutality, of whom the world so seldom hears.

The supposed cause of his death was "general debility." But I say that the man died of a broken heart.

THE EAGLE AND THE CROSS.

In the midst of a rough field in one of the southern counties of England—a field which for generations has been tilled by the peasant and furrowed by the plough—there lies a small parallelogram, some five feet by four, of black and white mosaic. Around it are closely-set red tiles; around them, again, fragments of flint walls; beyond these, the field, trenched and excavated by the patient hand of the antiquarian explorer, and in the distance a ring of trees encircling a hundred acres or so of this arable land. There is a village church within this hundred acres, but the whole parish does not contain souls enough—men, women, and children—to fill the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral; the nearest railway station is three miles away, the nearest town eight miles; a more peaceful and rural corner of England need scarcely

be sought. Yet here was a populous and civilised town when our Saxon forefathers were but a horde of rude barbarians, when Liverpool was a swamp and Birmingham a wilderness. That little panel of mosaic marks what may well be, to many minds, as interesting a spot as these islands can show; for on it stood the first altar to the God of the Christians of which we have witness in Great Britain.

There are, it need not be said, numerous towns in England which were founded by the Romans, or whose history extends still farther back into the past; London, Winchester, York, Cirencester, Chester, Manchester, Southampton, Durham, Chichester, are but few which are at once called to mind, and the majority of these have furnished proofs of the Roman occupancy in the shape of coins, pottery, and pavement. Doubtless they had also their churches, but the sites of them have been lost during the centuries of change which have swept and transmogrified those cities, so that little more than traditions remain of the Christianity professed in Britain before Augustine landed in Kent, or Columba set foot on the Island of Iona.

Roman castles and forts, speaking of the military occupation and defences of the land, and Roman roads—models to this day of the art of road-making—we have in abundance. The peculiarity about Silchester is that, while cities like York and Winchester have been altered and adapted by each successive generation, so that the old has been buried away under the new, and has thus passed out of knowledge or the hope of recovery, it has been preserved by its own misfortunes—like the Pompeii to which it is compared—to show to the nineteenth century a city of the Romans. No succeeding conquerors have reared their dwellings in these streets laid out by the servants of the Cæsars; no people have inhabited them since the fierce South Saxons besieged and burnt the place twelve hundred years ago. Its ruins crumbled and fell, and were in the early Middle Ages the quarry from whence builders of the day procured material; in later times its flints were many of them carted away to mend the country roads; the earth accumulated slowly upon its mouldering foundations and hid them tenderly from the destructive rain and frost and storm; and grass and corn waved above forum, and basilica, and temples. Only the memory of the old city survived, and the mighty walls which, refusing to

submit to the assaults of invading Teuton, or the slower and more certain powers of Nature's forces, still girded the buried town and looked down in silence upon fields in which the lark built his nest and the husbandman sowed and harvested the corn. Those hoary sentinels only could recall the days when Romans and Britons met in busy conclave in streets and market-place, when the city senators assembled in the great basilica, when the heathen worshipped the Unknown God in their temples, and the early Christians sang their psalms and hymns in their little church, and when the helmeted soldiery gathered beneath the standard of the Roman Eagle.

Silchester's earliest history, so far as we know it, goes back beyond the Romans to the time of the Celts, who made on this site a strong and extensive earthwork as a defence and place of refuge in days of tribal home rule, when the hand of every clan was against every other clan. In those days it was *Cæsar Segont*, the city of the Segontii, an early Celtic people who, probably with bronze hatchets in the age before iron was introduced into Britain, hewed away a clearing in the great northern forest of Hampshire, and, as their custom was, erected a stout fortification on the hill whence they might keep watch over the surrounding country, and wherein they might collect the tribe from their homes in the valley in case of danger. Later, it served the same purpose for the Belgic tribe of the *Attrebates*, and became *Calleva Atrebatum*, a name meaning, it is supposed, the town in the wood of the *Attrebates*. Such at least is the translation furnished as the most plausible, by Mr. Shore in his recent "History of Hampshire." Silchester, he adds, had also the same meaning, and appears in Domesday Book as *Oilestre*, the first syllable being allied to the Welsh "*cell-i*," a wood. The method of fortification was like that of other British camps; the high ground was encircled by substantial earthworks; without the mound was a wide ditch, and stockading added to the strength of the whole. This mound gave its irregular outline to the City of Silchester, for the Romans, instead of mapping out their usual quadrangle to be filled in with the straight lines of streets they were as fond of as are the modern Americans, showed in this instance their practical sense by adopting the area already marked out and entrenched for them. It was scarcely a

site the Romans would have selected, since it stood on clay, far enough from a river, and with the Romans an abundant water supply was in general a first necessity of life. But it was perhaps not altogether a matter of choice with the conquerors. The British people, it may be fairly assumed, settled down within the walls of their camp and in their homesteads round about it; and the Romans, accepting the fact and knowing that the place was on an important line of communication—possibly on the line they themselves had taken on their march, under Claudius and Vespasian, from their southern landing-place to London—set to work to lay out the enclosed area in accordance with their general plan.

At the points of the compass were the four entrances of the city; four important roads entered in and divided it into four portions. The road to the north-east led to Londinium, that to the west to Sorbiodunum—Old Sarum; southward the way pointed to Venta Belgarum—Winchester; north-westward to Corinium—Cirencester. The Basilica, or Town Hall, and the Forum, or Market-Place, bore witness to the all-importance of civil government and town life in the eyes of the conquerors. "In the midst of its network of narrow streets," writes Mr. J. R. Green, in his "Making of England," "lay the central forum, round which stood the public offices and principal shops of the place, while one side was wholly occupied by the huge basilica, or justice-hall, whose central nave was sustained by two rows of stately Corinthian columns and closed at each end by a lordly apse. Remains such as this show that the Roman tradition was still strong among the citizens, and it may have been with the Roman eagle at their head and in the Roman order that its men marched against the West Saxons." It was in a little chamber at the south-west corner of this great hall that the Roman standard bearing the Imperial eagle was found. It passed into the possession of the lord of the manor, the Duke of Wellington; the eloquent symbol of the mightiest power of the ancient world—of "the glory that was Rome"—strangely finding an asylum, after an entombment of thirteen hundred years, in the historic mansion which the Prince of Waterloo holds of the Imperial Crown of England by the tribute of a yearly flag presented to the Sovereign on the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. The basilica was two hundred and seventy feet long, or twenty feet longer than the nave

of Winchester Cathedral; the public offices were on the west side, and in the southern apse was the tribune, or magisterial platform, faced with Parbeck marble.

The visitor of to-day may stand on a green bank among the ruins of the bygone city, and looking over the broad area of the grass-grown forum, repeople it in his fancy with Roman citizens—Romano-British, probably, most of them—in their togas and tunics, meeting to transact their business and to talk over the affairs of the town and state. It was something more than a simple market-place; it was the Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square of the orators and the demagogues, the natural gathering-ground of the populace, where harangues like the great speech which Shakespeare places in the mouth of Mark Antony were delivered. Around the square ran a colonnade of small shops, probably without dwelling-houses attached, which may be roughly likened to the Burlington Arcade. The ingenious imagination of Silchester's first excavator, the Rev. J. G. Joyce, sought to identify the various trades and businesses carried on at these little shops; but to-day, at all events, the low lines of foundation walls which remain are not eloquent to the ordinary visitor of drapery stores, or sandals, or oysters.

In addition to forum and basilica, remains have been discovered of two other characteristic possessions of a Roman city—temples and baths. One of the temples is sixteen-sided, and its remains, consisting of two parallel walls, one within the other, are particularly interesting, more especially when we contrast its ceremonies—the vows and rites and sacrifices connected with the worship of the old gods and goddesses of the Greek and Roman Pantheon, their endless stream of deities, and their exuberance of myth and fable—with the religion now preached in the little church. It measures only twenty-five feet by forty-five. The bath, of which the sluices have been excavated, revealing their structure as plainly as when designed by the Roman architect, and the houses of the residents, appear to have been of the usual Roman type.

The Romans, we know, were an eminently sanitary people; but the scavenging arrangements of Silchester were of the simplest, so far as household refuse was concerned. Old pots and crocks and other domestic débris were thrown into a

rubbish pit, and when the pit was full it was deserted and a second started. Consequently the number of these is a remarkable feature of the city, and the modern antiquary has cause to feel grateful for the primitive disposition of things, since it has furnished a valuable assortment of pottery fragments, capable in many instances of being pieced together to show the form and ornament of the original article, and of bones which afford an idea of the domestic animals of those times. Some of the pots had been neatly riveted by Romano-British craftsmen before their final breakage and condemnation to the dust-heap. Some half-dozen kinds of pottery are represented—the red Samian, most highly prized of all ware by the Romans, mud-coloured Upchurch vases, made on the banks of the Medway, the Caistor, from the neighbourhood of Peterborough, pseudo-Arantine, and New Forest, resembling the Staffordshire stoneware. Cream, red, and black, they form a sufficiently decorative collection; and besides these was a coarser sort, probably of native British make, brought into the city by itinerant vendors. The bones are those of the horse, ox, and sheep. The animals were all of small breeds; the cattle approximating to the little Kerry race, the agricultural pets of to-day, and the horses being compared with the rough ponies of the New Forest. Other fragmentary remains in addition to these comprise the familiar Roman villa antiquities which constitute part of the stock-in-trade of most museums, tiles of various patterns, urns, with or without the venerable dust of some ancient Roman, oyster and mussel shells, rings and keys, nails and broken knives, stag-horn knife-handles, hairpins, bracelets, and such like things. Very few are preserved on the site where they were found; the little museum shed is not contrived for an extensive show, and Silchester is too distant to be the resort of seekers after knowledge. Some of the earlier finds are in the possession of the Duke of Wellington, at Strathfieldsaye; the principal collection is in the Reading Museum, to which they have been presented by the Society of Antiquaries, the learned and diligent excavators of the site. Two things among them may be mentioned as suggestive to even the most ignorant beholder: a cast in the mud of the street of a child's foot, a child which played about in Silchester some thirteen hundred years ago; and a

plasterer's float, still bearing traces of the last colours it touched in finishing off the stucco on the walls of some one of these ruined houses.

But the grandest part left to us of old Silchester consists of the magnificent walls of the city. No other adjective can do them justice. It is supposed that they are not coeval with the foundation of the Roman city itself. It was not, says Green, till the decline of the Roman empire brought trouble to its gates, that inland towns such as this needed to seek the shelter of a ring of walls; but whenever they were built, they were built for defence and they were built to last. The Roman power is but a thing of historic memory, the fierce Germanic tribes which assaulted the safety and the civilisation of Britain have become the foremost nation on the face of the globe; the little town, with its shops, its judgement-hall, its arts and crafts, its temples and its insignificant Christian church, has been for centuries buried under green grass and waving corn, its tiles turned up now and again by the plough, its coins found in trenches of the arable land, among potato tubers and pea stalks. The walls stand, still decaying but slowly in their old age, and suggesting rather the Gothic fortress of some mediæval lord than a structure raised in the earliest days of the Dark Ages, when our ancestors, whether Saxon or Norman or Dane are we, were pirate gangs, or fighting hordes, or at best clans of rude agriculturists tending their cattle on their rough Teutonic homesteads. The walls enclose the whole city, their circuit being about a mile and three-quarters; the thickness is from seven to ten feet, and the height in some places still as much as fifteen feet. They are built of flint, amply furnished in those days by the denudation of the adjacent chalk land of Hampshire, layers of broad bonding-stone—a North Berkshire oolite—to every five or six rows. Great ivy trees have their rootlets among the strong masonry, and flourish exuberantly above it, and other trees cling to and overshadow the rugged and broken handiwork of the ancient builders, the ceinture of walls being plainly defined by the ring of accompanying vegetation. To north and south, east and west, are the remains of the four gates into the city; the two former were single, and from the point of view of defence the strongest description known; the east and west were double, with guard chambers on either side. The

doors themselves, judging by an iron clamp found on the site, were four inches thick. At the east there was also a postern gate, conjectured to lead to the amphitheatre, which lies to the north-east and is now a pleasant grass-grown dell, surrounded by trees. It is strange, standing on its margin, among thorn bushes and wild flowers, in the peaceful quiet of a summer day, to picture this the arena of Roman games, perhaps of the savagery of the gladiators' fights which went to make a Roman holiday, or of yet ghastlier scenes when the early Christians were sowing the seeds of the Church in drops of martyr blood.

The later history of the town is mainly conjectural. It was apparently falling into decay before the Saxons stormed its defences. After having shared with Winchester and Porchester the distinction of occupying first place among the towns of Roman Hampshire—towns which in their virtual independence and their self-government were practically little republics under their own senates and magistrates—it sank in numbers and importance when the Roman power withdrew from the country, the Roman civilisation requiring the prop of Roman officialdom to maintain its strength, thus contrasting with the slowly developing culture of Teutonic individualism. Whether there is not some danger of modern democracy, with its ever-growing appeals to State control, falling at last into the same helpless lethargy of the over-governed may be worth considering as we are confronted with proofs of Silchester's decline. While the population decreased the public buildings became grander than they needed, greater than they could keep in repair. The defence of the double gates grew too much for them, and the west gate is accordingly found to have been blocked up with fragments of architecture, capitals of columns and the like, which must once have formed part of those buildings and been the pride of wealthy citizens. Yet Silchester held out for long against the new invaders. Until after the middle of the sixth century it barred the progress of the West Saxons towards the west along the track which lay between the Andredswald and the Thames.

To quote Green again: "Of the ring of fortresses that enclosed the Gwent, Calleva Atrebatum, the modern Silchester, which stood at the edge of the forest where the roads from Winchester and Old Sarum united on their way to London, alone

remained in British hands. . . . We know nothing of the rout of the burghers, or of the siege and ruin of their town. It is only the discovery of the legendary eagle hidden away, as it would seem, in some secret recess and buried for ages beneath the charred wreck of one of its houses, that tells its own pathetic tale of the fall of Silchester." This must have happened between 560 and 570, during the conquering onward march of Ceawlin, son of Cymric. The city was laid waste by the sword and by fire, its houses were reduced to smouldering ruins; the very coins picked up in abundance on the site are many of them so burned as to be of no value even for the archæologist. "Even if some part of the city and some of its inhabitants were spared, and were not reduced to slavery, after the departure of the old civilisation and the commerce to which they had been accustomed, the ruins of Silchester," observes Mr. Shore, "could not have afforded them a subsistence. What the Saxons spared of the city must have been left for the weather to finish, and the ruins gradually crumbled away, except the massive walls, which have lasted to the present time."

What may yet be beneath the surface, the patent investigations of the Society of Antiquaries will, it is to be hoped, discover for us; and equally must it be the wish of every historical student that some means may be found of preserving this interesting monument of the past safe alike from the destructive forces of the weather and the inroads of the plough.

A BREAD-AND-BUTTER MISS.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER V.

MY visit at Oaklands was fast drawing to a close. A few days more, and the party would break up, Cara and Joey being due at another country house, while their own preserves had a rest. Our last day together was to be celebrated by a picnic on one of the "broads" some ten miles away. It was arranged that some of us should ride, and some drive, to an inn on the banks of the broad, where the horses could be put up. Then we were to have what Cara called a "savage feast," which being interpreted meant that there were to be no servants, table-cloth, knives, forks, or plates—none of the usual conveniences

of life, in short, except mugs to drink out of.

At first it had been settled that I was to go in the landau with three others of the party. Sir John, however, asked permission to drive me in the pony-cart with Quicksilver. Cara consented somewhat unwillingly, and accordingly we set out tête-à-tête at the tail of the procession.

"We won't hurry," said my companion. "I'm an old hand at picnics. We'll arrive just as all the hampers are unpacked, and the food ready to be eaten."

"And can you really enjoy your lunch after such unscrupulous behaviour?" I enquired.

"To be sure," he replied. "I never allow my conscience to interfere with my appetite. I mean to enjoy not only my lunch, but everything else on our last day. Are you sorry it is our last day?" he added softly.

"Yes, for some things," I said. "Of course I shall like going home again, but I dare say I shall miss the gaiety and constant excitement of the life here, at least just at first."

"And won't you miss any of your new friends—just at first?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I replied warmly. "I shall miss Trix Haughton," then added, as I caught a look of disappointment in his face, "and—and—everybody who has been kind to me, of course."

"And everybody to whom you have been kind, I hope, including myself. I should like to think that my pupil would miss me and remember me for just a little while. I shall never forget her."

His look and tone moved me in spite of myself.

"Of course I shall remember you," I said. "I should be very ungrateful if I didn't. It was very good of you to waste so much time over my riding-lessons."

This assurance did not seem to give quite so much satisfaction as I expected.

"Gratitude is a most respectable emotion," remarked Sir John drily, as he gave Quicksilver a flick. "I think we have allowed time for the others to prepare our lunch now. It won't do to arrive after they have devoured all the nicest things."

Thanks to my companion's diplomacy we appeared upon the scene of action just in the very nick of time, when the rest of the party were squatting down to consume the food they had laboriously unpacked. Our mean conduct brought us a deservedly warm reception.

"You're a nice couple," remarked Cara. "I suppose you wanted to make quite sure of having a savage feast. We're all savage enough with you."

"I've been telling everybody what to do and seeing them not do it for the last half-hour," joined in Sereno, "and now I'm quite worn out."

"We'll punish them by not letting them have any salt," said Trix. "That is the most refined torture I can think of."

"Never mind, Miss Western, come and sit by me," said Mrs. Wyncott with her usual sweetness, "and I will protect you from the other savages."

"Will you take me under your wing, too?" asked Sir John, lowering himself somewhat gingerly by Mrs. Wyncott's side.

"Come, come, Downham, you're no chicken," shouted Lord Regie, whose jokes did not always err on the side of good taste.

Then began the serious business of the meal. There was a little embarrassment visible at first, when we found it necessary to take a bone in our fingers, and gnaw it like a dog. But when we looked round and saw that everybody else was doing exactly the same thing in more or less inelegant fashion, it became borne in upon us that "fingers were made before forks," and our scruples vanished.

As soon as our hunger was satisfied, the question arose as to how we were to amuse ourselves for the rest of the afternoon. Some wished to walk along the banks of the broad and fish, while others decided to go on the water in such boats as the inn could provide. Sir John had secured a little tub with just room for two, and invited me to come and explore the broad with him. I did not feel much inclination for such a voyage, since I was becoming a little afraid of my fatherly friend, but it was difficult to know how to refuse. I looked at Cara, hoping that she would veto the suggestion, but before she could speak, Mr. Colthurst remarked:

"These broads are not very safe for people who don't understand their little ways. There are nasty scuds sometimes."

"Oh, I will back my boat to ride out any gale," said Sir John. "Miss Western will be quite safe with me."

"Well, do as you like," said Cara indifferently. "Only don't upset yourselves, for no one will jump in after you. And mind you are back in good time; we start at four sharp. Now, Mr. Colthurst,

I want you to come and put worms on my hook for me."

I looked round. The other members of the party had already dispersed, and there seemed no reasonable excuse for not getting into the boat; at any rate, I was too inexperienced to invent one.

"Are you sure it's quite safe?" I asked, hesitating.

"Of course it is," replied Sir John. "Do you think I would let you run into danger? Come, let me help you in."

I made no further objection. For a little while we sculled idly about within sight of the shore. Then Sir John proposed that we should try sailing for a change. He unfurled a big carriage-umbrella that he had brought with him, and as there was a strong breeze, we were carried along without any exertion on our parts.

"We mustn't go too far away," I said at length. "It will take us much longer to get back."

"Oh, there's plenty of time," said my companion. "Don't let us talk about going back yet. Remember," taking my hand in his, "this is the last time we shall be alone together for—who knows how long?"

I withdrew my hand under cover of pointing out a peculiar-looking bird on the water.

"Never mind the bird," said Sir John sentimentally. "I want you to think about me. I wonder if you have any idea how empty my life will be when I lose you out of it. I shall find the loneliness of my lot, and the absence of all sympathy and affection harder to bear than I ever did before."

He sighed, and threw a pleading glance at me, the effect of which was slightly marred by the crowsfeet round his eyes. I felt vaguely disturbed by this appeal, and uncertain how to respond to it.

"I am sorry you are not happy," I said at length. "But, after all, you know so many people; surely you must be fond of some of them."

He did not answer for a moment, and then said irrelevantly:

"You are a delightful child. Do you know, I feel desperately tempted to do something that would make you very angry; at least, I suppose it would."

He bent towards me as he spoke. I drew back in alarm.

"Oh, don't," I said. "It would be a pity to quarrel on our last day. Do look

at your watch again; I am sure it must be getting late."

"No," he replied, "it is only a quarter past three."

"Then I am certain your watch must be wrong," I said. "Anyhow, let us turn back now. Cara won't like it if we are late."

"As you please," he answered, and turned the boat towards the shore.

When we reached the scene of the picnic, to my dismay there was not a sign of our party to be seen.

"What can it mean?" I asked, turning anxiously towards my companion.

He took out his watch again, looked at it in a puzzled way, shook it, and then held it to his ear.

"You don't mean to say it has stopped?" I exclaimed.

"I'm really afraid it has," he replied. "It still says three-fifteen. 'I'm awfully sorry, but generally it is thoroughly trustworthy.'"

"Then they have all gone home," I cried, in consternation. "Cara will be so vexed with me; on my last day, too. I wish I had never gone in that horrid boat."

"Your cousin can't possibly blame you," said Sir John soothingly. "She may blame me, or rather my unlucky watch as much as she likes. But after all," he continued, "there's not much harm done. They will have left the pony-cart for us, and if we drive fast, we shall be home nearly as soon as they are."

"Then let us go to the inn at once," I said, "and find out what the right time is."

On arriving at the "Fisherman's Friend," we found that it was already nearly five. A note which Cara had left behind was handed to me.

"You naughty child to be so late," it ran. "I would have waited for you, but Joey thinks he has a fit of the gout coming on, and is rampant to be off. Drive after us as fast as you can."

"I will go and see the pony put in," said Sir John, "if you will wait in the inn parlour."

I went into the close little parlour, with its lugubrious ornaments of goggle-eyed stuffed fish, and took an uneasy seat on the horse-hair sofa. In a few minutes Sir John came in with a very long face.

"I'm awfully sorry, Miss Western," he said. "But we seem doomed to have misfortunes to-day. Quicksilver has turned

up lame; I am afraid he must have got kicked in the stable. He can't possibly do the return journey."

"Oh, how dreadful," I exclaimed. "What will Cara say? She is so fond of that pony."

Then as a sense of our own situation dawned upon me, I added:-

"And what are we to do? I suppose we can hire something to drive home in?"

"I've been making enquiries," he answered, "but I can't hear of anything that would take us so far. They have nothing here but a very infirm old pony, and a sort of little pig-cart that would shake you all to bits."

"But we must make some attempt to get home," I said crossly. "We can't stop here till somebody comes to look for us."

"Of course not," he returned, smiling. "I find there is a station at Halesford, not more than two miles from here. A train passes at five-thirty which will take us to Hornby Junction, and there we can hire a dogcart and drive to Oaklands."

"Very well," I answered dejectedly. "Then I suppose we had better start at once?"

"I hear our chariot-wheels already," he said. "Do you know I think this adventure is rather good fun. Don't look so cast down; you will be able to laugh over it this evening."

We took our places on the narrow board that constituted the box-seat of the rickety little cart. The old pony shambling along in a manner that made me desperately afraid we should be late for the train. However, I armed myself with the lashless whip, and flicked the creature's shaggy sides, while Sir John jerked at its tough mouth, and finally we arrived at the station five minutes before the train was due.

As soon as we were fairly off, I curled myself up in a corner of the carriage and stared out of the window at the level fields, which already seemed to be fading out of reality in the vague autumn twilight. My companion came and sat down beside me.

"Are you very tired, my child?" he asked in his favourite paternal, sentimental tone.

Somehow, this tone, which I had never hitherto resented, now caused me a feeling of mistrust and uneasiness. I found myself wishing that I had been left behind with some one like Mr. Colthurst, or even Mr. Johnson.

"Yes, I am very tired," I replied coldly.

"And I want my tea. I think I could go to sleep if I were alone."

"You are the hardest-hearted little girl I ever met," he said, laughing. "But I won't bother you any more now. Go to sleep and dream of your tea."

There was silence between us for some minutes. I was wondering drowsily what time we should get home, and whether Cara would be very angry, when the train stopped at a little station and a porter ran violently up and down calling out, "Baber! Baber!" in excited tones. I fancied I had heard this name before, and when we moved off again I pondered over it in half-sleepy fashion.

Suddenly it occurred to me that I had heard it on my way from town, and had been amused to find that it was the local way of pronouncing Barborough. Then, in a moment it flashed across my mind that Barborough was on the London side of Halesford, while Hornby Junction was on the Norwich side, in which case we must be travelling in the wrong direction.

"Oh, Sir John," I exclaimed, as I realised this appalling fact, "I do believe we are going the wrong way. I am almost certain this is an up train."

"Impossible," he replied calmly. "I looked it out in the time-table. You can see for yourself."

He took a little railway-guide from his pocket, and handed it to me.

I hastily glanced down the page that related to Halesford, and saw in a moment that my fears were confirmed.

"You have made a dreadful mistake," I said. "A down train was due at Halesford at five thirty-five; that must have been the one we passed at a siding just now. You evidently looked at the wrong column, or confused the two together. I should have thought you might understand a railway-guide by this time."

"My education was shockingly neglected in the matter of time-tables," he replied. "However, I hope you may turn out to be wrong; let me look at the book again."

I gave him the guide, and watched his face anxiously as he studied the page in silence.

"Yes," he admitted at length, "we do seem to have made rather a mess of it."

"Speak for yourself," I retorted indignantly. "I had nothing to do with the mistake, except to find it out. I suppose the only thing to be done now is to get out at the next station and take the first train

back again. But it will make us very late."

"Yes, I'm afraid it will make us rather late," he remarked coolly. "If I am not mistaken again, there is no other train down this wretched little line, except on market-days, until the ten-fifteen from town."

This was a pleasant prospect! A feeling of forlorn helplessness came over me, and I was conscious of a strong desire to cry. However, I reflected that such a proceeding could do no good, and, calling pride to my aid, I observed composedly:

"Then we shall have to drive home. Having missed my tea, I am quite determined to get back to dinner. I don't intend to camp out until ten o'clock at night."

"It would be a long drive by road," returned Sir John. "About thirty miles, I should guess. We shouldn't get home much sooner than if we had dinner at the next place we stop at, and waited for the last train."

I went to the window and leant out to see if there was any sign of a station. But the line of rails stretched vacantly ahead of us, and the country looked positively uninhabited as far as the eye could reach.

"This has been an unlucky day," I remarked gloomily. "It ought to be a Friday instead of a Monday."

"You are not very complimentary," said my companion. "Do you think it so very unlucky to be condemned to spend a few more hours in my society than Mrs. Grundy would altogether approve?"

"Oh, no, it's not that," I replied. "Of course a married man is always looked upon as a chaperon, isn't he? But I am sorry to think that Cara will be annoyed with me on my last day; I don't suppose she will ever ask me to stay again."

"Don't fret about that," he said soothingly. "Mrs. Broughton can't possibly blame us for having got into the wrong train; it's a thing people do every day. Leave it to me; I'll undertake to lie you out of any scrape—and myself, too."

"Lie!" I said, opening my eyes. "What necessity is there for lies?"

His answer was drowned by a shriek from the engine, the train began to slacken speed, and in another minute drew up at the station. Scarcely had it stopped before I sprang out, and laid violent hands on the station-master.

"When is the next down train due?" I asked eagerly.

"There's not another to-day before the ten-fifteen, miss," answered the man.

"But that will make us so late," I said piteously. "And our friends will be so anxious about us. Is there no other way of getting back?"

The station-master took off his cap, and rubbed the back of his head thoughtfully.

"Well," he said at length, "there is a luggage train due in a few minutes. If you're really set on getting home, I might say a word for you to the guard, and I dare say he'd let you ride home in the van. But you'd find it wonderful jolty."

"Oh, never mind that," I exclaimed. "I don't care what I go in; the engine or the tender would do for me."

The official smiled.

"Well, I'll do my best to manage it for you, miss," he said. "The train is just signalled."

Sir John, who had listened to this colloquy in silence, now came forward, and addressed me in his most paternal tones.

"My dear child, you can't possibly travel in that thing. Be sensible, and come and have some dinner at the inn; you know you're famished. Afterwards I will drive you home if you wish it. I dare say I can hire a dogcart."

"No, thank you," I replied with decision. "I much prefer the luggage train."

He made no further protest, and in a few moments the train rumbled heavily into the station. Presently my friendly station-master came up and said:

"You and the gentleman can ride home in the guard's van, miss. You won't find it very easy going; but she don't stop again before Hornby Junction."

We took our seat upon some boxes in the dark, stuffy van, and the train bumped slowly off again.

"It is only just half-past six," remarked Sir John, who had ostentatiously wound up his watch, and regulated it by the station clock. "If we have any luck we may be home before they have finished dinner."

I made no reply. In solemn silence we clung to our boxes as the train jolted along. At length, after a journey lasting apparently several weeks, we pulled up at Hornby Junction.

"I will go to the inn and see about a cart," said my companion, as soon as we alighted.

"Thank you," I replied, "but I intend

to do that myself. You don't seem to have much talent for the practical details of life."

Fortunately, the horse and cart belonging to the station inn were at home and at our disposal, so it seemed as if fate had tired at last of making us her sport. I heaved a sigh of relief when I found myself, a few minutes later, driving briskly in the direction of Oaklands. I felt that my troubles were nearly over. When we turned in at the park gates, Sir John broke the silence that reigned between us.

"I hope you will let me explain everything, Miss Western," he said, "and take all the blame of this contretemps upon myself."

"I think you could hardly do less," I replied shortly.

"I know," he rejoined. "I only wanted to point out that we had better settle

upon a joint plan of action. Of course, I shall tell the truth about our adventures; but there's no necessity for telling the whole truth. It will be quite sufficient to explain that we were late because my watch had stopped, and then that the cob turned up lame, so that we had to come home by train. There's no object in telling them that we got into the wrong train; we needn't give ourselves away more than is absolutely necessary. Will you hear me out in this?"

"Very well," I answered.

"It is now ten minutes past eight," he went on, as we drove up to the door. "They will only just have begun dinner. I don't know how long it takes you to get into a tea-gown, but I can dress in twelve minutes, and explain in three. So if you come down in about twenty minutes you will find matters made smooth."

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Pictorial," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON finding himself condemned to twelve months in London, Dennis Falconer had debated the question of where he should live at some length, and had finally decided on returning to some rooms in the neighbourhood of the Strand, in which he had been wont to establish himself during his temporary residences in London for the past fifteen years. It was not a fashionable part of London. Falconer was a richer man now than he had been fifteen years before, and there were sundry luxuries to be had in those quarters of London where wealthy bachelors congregate, which were not recognised so far south of Piccadilly. It was also natural to him to think twice before he abandoned the idea of living where it was "the proper thing"—of the hour—to live. But he was known and respected in his old rooms; he would be received there with deferential delight; he would be of the first importance in his landlady's estimation; and these things, little as he knew it, had a distinct influence on his decision.

The two rooms which he occupied, on the first floor, bore a strong likeness to the majority of first-floor rooms in the same street, occupied by single gentlemen. These gentlemen were not, as a rule, of the class who think it worth while to impress their artistic character upon the room in which they live; as a whole, indeed, they might have been said to lack artistic character. Here and there was a

more inveterate smoker, newspaper-reader, or novel-reader, as the case might be, the sign manual of whose tastes was not to be obliterated. But as a rule it was the landlady's taste that reigned supreme and monotonous.

Dennis Falconer's rooms were no exception to the rule. The furniture was very comfortable, very solid, and very ugly, in the style of thirty years ago; an artistic temperament would have modified the whole appearance of the room, insensibly and necessarily, in the course of a week. But Falconer was not even conscious that anything was wrong. He was as nearly devoid of æsthetic sense, even on its broadest lines, as it is possible for a civilised man to be; and the state of mind which takes pleasure in the tone of curtains and carpets, and the form of tables, chairs, or china, was to him incomprehensible and consequently a little contemptible.

On a November morning, with an incipient yellow fog hanging about, the appearance of the room in which breakfast was waiting for him was calculated to cast a gloom over a temperament never so little open to such influences, and Dennis Falconer as he opened his bedroom door and came slowly out, looked as though his mental atmosphere was already sufficiently heavy. He always breakfasted punctually at nine o'clock, and he never went to bed before one; it simply never occurred to him to make any concession to the emptiness of his present life by spending more than seven hours out of the twenty-four in sleep, even if he had been physically able to do so; and there were days when the intervening seventeen hours hung on his hands with an almost unendurable weight. He had never been a man who readily made friends, and his tendency in this direction had

steadily decreased as he grew older, so that the few men with whom he was intimate were friends of his early manhood; and, as it happened, none of these intimates were in England at the moment. He was absolutely incapable of forming those cheery, unmeaning acquaintanceships which make the savour of life to so many unoccupied men. He was one of those men with whom no one thinks of becoming familiar; who is vaguely supposed either to have a private and select circle of friends, or to be sufficient for himself; whose demeanour, correct, self-contained, and a trifle formal, seems to hold the world at a distance. Consequently his intercourse with his fellow-creatures was limited by his present life to slight conversation on the topics of the day at his club, or in various drawing-rooms where he paid grave, stiff calls, or attended stately functions. Out off from his own particular work he had no interests and no pursuits.

It was a dreary life, in truth, and it was little wonder that Falconer's expression grew rather more austere with every week. The sentiments of a man of his temperament towards a world in which there was so little place for him, and from which he could derive so little satisfaction, would inevitably tend towards stern disapproval.

On this particular morning the sense of dreariness was very heavy upon him. On the previous day he had had an interview with the great doctor to whose fiat he owed his detention in London. The great doctor had been indefinite and unsatisfactory; had looked grave and talked vaguely about troublesome complications and a possible necessity of complete repose. Falconer had made no sign of discomposure, had taken his leave with his usual courteous gravity, and had left the consulting-room with a cold chill at his heart. The cold chill was about it still this morning as he walked to his window before going to the breakfast-table, and stood there looking blankly out. What he was really looking at was the prospect before him if, as the doctor had hinted, he should have to lie up for a time. A lodging and a nurse, or a hospital; solitude and confinement in either case.

He sighed heavily, and turning as though with the instinct to turn away from his troubles, he sat down to the table, poured out his coffee, and took up the letters lying by his plate. There were only two—one in a common-looking envelope directed in an illiterate hand, the other

in a clear, characteristic man's hand, at the sight of which his face brightened perceptibly.

"Aston," he said to himself, and opened it quickly.

His friendship for the little doctor, which time had only served to strengthen, was, perhaps, the most genial sentiment of Dennis Falconer's life, and Dr. Aston's absence in India at this particular period had been a bitter disappointment to him. He had hoped for some time that the doctor's plans—always of a somewhat erratic nature—might bring him back to London shortly, and as his eyes fell on the first sentence of the letter a slight sound of intense relief escaped him—an eloquent testimony to his present loneliness. Dr. Aston began by telling him that he would be in England before Christmas.

The letter was long and interesting; it abounded in bits of vivid description and shrewd observation, and its comments on Falconer's proceedings were keen and kindly. Its recipient allowed himself to become absorbed in it to the total neglect of his breakfast, and his expression was lighter than it had been for weeks when he came upon these sentences towards the close of the letter:

"By-the-bye, in the 'latest intelligence' of London society—all is fish in the shape of human nature that comes to my net, as you know, and I study that curious institution carefully whenever I get the chance—I constantly, nowadays, come across the name of a Mrs. Romaine. 'The charming Mrs. Romaine and her good-looking son' is the usual formula. It is not by any chance the little woman with whom I got myself and you into such a terrible fix years and years ago at Nice—William Romaine's widow? Is it any relation? I should like to know what became of that little woman, if you can tell me—she had stuff in her—and whether the boy has dree'd his weird yet."

Falconer laid down the letter abruptly, and turned to his breakfast, his face stern and uncompromising. His interview with Mrs. Romaine, now a fortnight old, had accentuated markedly his grim disapprobation of her, and the strong feeling of reprobation that stirred him then had so little subsided that the least touch was enough to re-endow it with vigorous life.

"Stuff in her!" he muttered, with a world of contempt in the curt ejaculation. "Stuff in her! If Aston only knew!"

He glanced at the letter again, and a certain disapproval, personal to the writer, expressed itself in the grave set of his lips as he re-read the words about Julian; his whole mental and moral attitude was antagonistic to, and inclined to condemn, what he characterized now as "Aston's dangerous theories." He passed with what seemed to him practical sense from "Aston's extravagance" to a stern consideration of the heinousness of such a life and education as Julian's for a young man in Julian's position. Julian's position, rightly considered, involved in his eyes a reaping in obscurity, humility, and sombreness of life of the harvest of shame and disgrace which his father had sown; and that there was anything inconsistent between this view of the case and his condemnation of Dr. Aston's theories he was utterly unaware.

He applied himself to his breakfast, still meditating on Mrs. Romayne and the probable consequences of her callousness, and then he took up the other letter and opened it.

At the opening of his last expedition, one of the men attached to it had met with a disabling accident, and had been sent home. The man had been with Falconer on a previous expedition, and when the latter returned to England he had made enquiries about him, and had finally, and with no little difficulty, traced him out to find him crippled for life, and in a state of abject poverty. Falconer, according to his narrow and orthodox lights, as strictly conventional in their way as were Mrs. Romayne's in hers, was a good man. The letter he was reading now, from the wife of this man, was written by a woman by whom he was regarded as a kind of Providence; to be revered indeed, not loved, but to be revered with all her heart. She and her husband had been rescued by him from despair; all that medical skill could do for the man had been done at his expense. The pair had been settled by him in a small house in Camden Town, where Mrs. Dixon, a brisk, capable woman, was to let lodgings. To this house Falconer had been once or twice to see the crippled man; and he was not now surprised to receive from the wife the information—conveyed in a style in which natural loquacity struggled with awe of her correspondent—that the husband had had one of the bad attacks of suffering to which he was liable, and that if Mr. Falconer could spare half an

hour, Dixon would "take it very kind with his duty."

Falconer smiled grimly at the words "if Mr. Falconer could spare half an hour." His whole day was practically at Dixon's disposal. He would go up to Camden Town that afternoon, he decided; he almost wished he had thought of going before, and as the thought crossed his mind, the remembrance of what might possibly be lying in wait for himself in the not very distant future made him rise abruptly and thrust his letters into his pocket.

It was about twelve o'clock when he left his rooms and walked slowly away in the direction of club-land. He usually got through an hour or so at his club before lunch, reading the papers and so forth. The threatening fog of three hours earlier had rolled away, and there were gleams of wintry sunshine about which made walking pleasant. Dr. Aston's letter had cheered Falconer considerably; the feeling, too, that he had a definite occupation for his afternoon, and an occupation which was not invented, was invigorating; and altogether he was in better spirits than he had been for many a day. He was walking up Waterloo Place, when his eyes, which could not forego, even in a London street, their trained habits of keen, accurate observation, lighted on Marston Loring, who was coming down Waterloo Place on the opposite side of the road. Loring was a man Dennis Falconer particularly disliked, and after one disapproving glance he was looking away, when he saw the other suddenly stop with a movement—and evidently an exclamation—of surprise and welcome. In the same instant he became aware that Julian Romayne had turned out of a side-street, and was greeting his friend apparently with effusion. Falconer's brow clouded involuntarily. The instinct of kin was so strong in him that there was a certain touch of personal feeling, little as he wished it, in his connection with the Romaynes which made the thought of them particularly disagreeable to him; and here, for the second time to-day, the young man and his mother were forced upon his notice. He pursued his way up the street, watching Julian grimly, and as he passed, still on the opposite pavement, the corner where the two young men were standing, Julian happened to look across, saw him, and made a ready, courteous gesture of salutation. Falconer returned it stiffly enough, and walked on.

Julian turned to Loring with a laugh.

"Old bear!" he said; "I wish he'd take himself off to Africa or somewhere. He's a regular wet blanket to have about! Well, old fellow, and what's the news?"

Julian was looking very fresh, vigorous, and full of life. There was a curious suggestion about him of alertness which was not without a certain excitement; and his tone and manner as he spoke were almost superabundantly frank and loquacious.

Ten days before, Loring had received a note from Mrs. Romaine telling him that Julian was going for a week's holiday to Brighton, and that the alteration in his room must be completed if possible in his absence. "It is a sudden idea with him, apparently," she had written; "but do let us take advantage of it."

If Loring had had his own private notion on the subject of this sudden idea on Julian's part he had made no sign to Julian's mother; he had paid, in silence, his cynical tribute to the maternal wisdom which had presumably recognised the fact that if freedom is not granted it will be snatched.

Three days had now passed since Julian's return, but it had happened—he himself could perhaps have told how—that until this Saturday afternoon he and Loring had not met. There was nothing in his face and manner at this moment, however, but the most lively, even demonstrative satisfaction, and without giving Loring time to answer his question he went on, with an ease and gaiety which were very like, and yet unlike, his mother.

"Where were you off to? The club? Come and have some lunch with me, do! I want to tell you how first-rate I think my room. I hear you've taken no end of trouble over it. It was awfully jolly of you, old man!"

"Glad you like it," returned Loring nonchalantly. "Yes, I think it's nice. But it was Mrs. Romaine who took the trouble."

He was studying Julian keenly, though quite imperceptibly, as he spoke, trying to arrest and dissect a certain self-sufficiency or independence about him which seemed to alter their relation in some way. The young man's manner was assumed—of that Loring was quite aware. But what exactly did it hide? What exactly was the secret?

He debated this question calmly with himself throughout the lunch which they

took together a little later on; interposing question and remarks the while into Julian's flow of fluent talk and laughter. About Brighton, in particular, Julian was full of chatter, and as he wound up a vivacious description of his doings there, Loring commented mentally:

"He hasn't been to Brighton at all!"

Aloud he said, as genially as nature ever allowed him to speak:

"Well, it's very jolly to see you back again, my boy. Do you know we've seen next to nothing of one another lately, and I vote we turn over a new leaf, eh? What are you going to do this afternoon, now?"

He was leaning back in his chair lighting a cigarette as he spoke, and apparently his attention was wholly claimed by the process; as a matter of fact, however, he was studying Julian's face intently, and his sense of annoyance was not untinged with admiration when not a muscle of that good-looking face moved. Julian leant back and crossed his legs airily.

"I promised to go to the Eastons', I'm sorry to say!" he said. "It's an awful bore! We might have done a theatre together!"

Now, the Eastons were mutual acquaintances of the two men, but it so happened that they had taken irremediable offence against Loring over some detail connected with the bazaar, and it was no longer possible for him to call upon them. Julian was of course aware of the fact, and Loring smiled cynically at what he recognised as a very clever move.

"A pity!" he said composedly. "Better luck another time. Well, you're not in any hurry, anyway."

"Not a bit!" assented Julian, cheerfully disposing of himself in a most comfortable and stationary attitude. But a moment later he sprang to his feet. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I nearly forgot! I've got a commission to do for my mother in Bond Street—shop closes at two. Can I do it?"

A hurried reference to his watch assured him that he would just do it, and with a hasty farewell he dashed out of the room. Loring did not propose to accompany him. It was not worth while, he told himself; and he smiled sardonically as Julian departed.

"I shall find out," he said to himself. "Of course I shall find out! The question is, is it worth while to wait, or shall I play my game with what I know? The attached friend of the boy warning his mother in

time"—he smiled again very unpleasantly—"or the sympathising friend of the mother having made a terrible discovery! Which is the better pose? The latter, I think. Yes, the latter! I'll wait until I've made my discovery."

He dropped the end of his cigarette into an ash-tray, sat for a moment more in deep thought, and then rose and strolled slowly away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JULIAN, meanwhile, hailed a passing hansom, sprang into it, and told the man to drive, not to Bond Street but to the Athenæum, Camden Town. There was an air about him as of one who plumes himself on having done a clever thing, and as he settled himself for his long drive there was a curious excitement and radiance in his face. When the cab reached its destination at last he jumped out and walked rapidly and eagerly away.

It was not a neighbourhood likely to be familiar to a young man about town, but Julian pursued his way with the certainty of a man who had followed it several times before. In about ten minutes he turned into a neat and respectable little street, consisting of two short rows of small houses with diminutive bow windows to the first-floor rooms. About half-way down he stopped at a house on the right-hand side and knocked with a quick, decided touch. He was an object of the deepest interest as he stood upon the little doorstep to a brisk, curious-looking woman who was standing in the ground-floor window of the house opposite, but her opportunity for observation was brief. The door was opened almost immediately, and with a pleasant greeting to the woman, who stood aside, he passed her and ran upstairs—a course of action evidently expected of him. He opened the door of the front room on the first floor and went eagerly in.

"Here I am!" he cried. "Did you expect me so soon?"

Standing in the middle of the room, as though she had suddenly started from her chair, with her hands outstretched towards him, was Clemence, and on the third finger of that thin left hand there shone a bright gold ring.

Her face was a delicate rosy red, as though with sudden joy just touched with shyness, and all the beauty which had been latent in her tired, work-worn face seemed to have been touched into vivid, almost startling life, by the hand of a great

magician. By contrast with the face she turned to Julian now, the large eyes deep and glowing, the mouth trembling a little with tenderness, the face of a month ago, pure and sweet as it had been, would have looked like the inanimate mask of a dormant soul. The soul was awake now, quivering with consciousness; womanhood had come with a purity and beauty beyond any possibility of girlhood. Looking at her face now, it was easy to see by what means alone the latent strength of her gentle character might be developed—by the means of love.

He drew her into his arms with an eager, confident touch, and she yielded to him completely, clinging to him with the colour deepening in her face as he kissed it boyishly again and again. It was a fortnight only since he had kissed her first.

"I was watching for you," she said softly. "I heard your step."

He laughed exultantly and kissed her again.

"I thought you'd be watching!" he said. "Though I'm earlier than I told you, do you know? Much earlier! I say, Clemence, how jolly the room looks!"

It was a small room, furnished and decorated in the simplest and cheapest style; as great a contrast as could well be imagined to the rooms to which he was accustomed. But it was very clean and very comfortable-looking; and there was a homelike, restful atmosphere about it which might well have radiated from the slender figure in the plain grey dress, with that shining wedding-ring and lovely, flushing face. She smiled, a very sweet, pleased little smile.

"Do you think so really?" she said. "I am so glad. It is that beautiful basket-chair you sent, and the flowers." She glanced as she spoke at a pot of chrysanthemums standing on a little table in the window. Then she turned to him again, her eyes a little deprecating. "Do you think you ought to spend so much money?" she said shyly.

Julian laughed, and flung his arm round her as he surveyed the little room with a vivid air of proprietorship. Here he was master. Here his word was law. Here he was in a world of his own making, and his only fellow-creature was his subject.

"It looks jolly!" he pronounced again as a final dictum. "Now, come and sit down, Clemence, and tell me what you've

been doing since yesterday!" He settled himself into the arm-chair by the fire with a lordly air as he spoke, adding: "Come and sit on this stool by me, like the sweetest girl in the world."

Clemence hesitated, hardly perceptibly. Hers was a nature to which trivial endearments came strangely, almost painfully. She had not yet learned to caress in play; and there was an innate, unconscious, personal dignity about her to which trivial self-abasement was unnatural. But almost before she was conscious of her reluctance there swept over her, like a great wave of hot sweetness, the remembrance that she was his wife! It was her duty to do as he wished. She came softly across the room, sat down on the stool he had drawn out, and laid her cheek against his arm.

It was a trivial action, very quietly performed, but it was instinct with the beauty of absolute self-abnegation; and as if, as her physical presence touched him, something of her spirit touched him too, a sudden quiet fell upon the exultant, self-satisfied boy at whose feet she sat. Not for the first time, by any means, there stole over Julian a vague uneasiness; a vague realisation of something beyond his ken; something in the light of which he shrank, unaccountably, from himself. His hand closed round the woman's hand lying in his with a touch very different from the boyish passion of his previous caresses, and for a moment he did not speak. Then he said slowly and in a low, dreamy voice:

"Clemence, I can't think why you should ever have loved me!"

The hand in his thrilled slightly, and the head on his shoulder was just shaken. Clemence could not tell him why she loved him. The bald outline she could trace as most women can trace it. She could look back upon her first sense of reliance, her pity, her admiration, her sense of strange, delightful companionship; but the why and wherefore of it, the mystery which had given to this young man and no other the key of her soul, this was to her as a miracle, as, indeed, there is always something miraculous in it, even when it seems most natural. To account for love; to say that in this case it is natural, in this case it is unnatural; is to confess ignorance of the first great attribute of love—that it is supernatural and divine.

There was another silence, a longer one this time, and the strange spell sank deeper

into Julian's spirit. He said nothing. It would have been a relief to him to speak; to reduce to words, or, indeed, to definite consciousness, the vague trouble that oppressed him; but its outlines were too large and too vague for him. It was in truth a sense of total moral insolvency, but he could not understand it as such, having no moral standpoint. Clemence neither moved nor spoke; her hand lay motionless in his; her cheek rested against him; her beautiful eyes looked straight before them with a dreamy, almost awestruck gaze.

At last, with a desperate determination to thrust away so unusual an oppression, Julian moved slightly and began to talk. He wanted to get back his sense of superiority, and his voice accordingly took its most boyish and masterful tone.

"You haven't told me what you've been doing, Clemence!" he said. "Have you given notice at your bonnet shop as I told you?"

Clemence lifted her head and sat up, clasping her hands lightly on the arm of his chair.

"No!" she said gently. "I thought I would ask you to think about it again. I would so much rather go on if you didn't mind. For one thing, what could I do all day?" She looked up into his face as she spoke with deprecating, pleading eyes, which were full of submission, too; and the submission was very pleasant to Julian.

"I do mind," he said authoritatively. "I can't have it, Clemence. I can't always see you home, don't you see, and I won't have you about at night alone. Besides, I don't choose that you should work."

"But I do so want to!" she said, laying her hand timidly and beseechingly on his. "It will be so difficult for you to keep us both; you will overwork yourself, I'm so afraid. Oh, won't you let me help? I've always worked, you know; it doesn't hurt me. You don't want to forget that you've married a work-girl, do you?"

She smiled at him as she spoke, one of her sweet, rare smiles, and he kissed her impetuously.

"Don't talk nonsense!" he said imperiously. "I can't allow it, and that's all about it. How do you suppose I could attend to my work when I'm kept at the hospital in the evening, if I were thinking all the time of you alone in the streets! No, you must give notice on Monday!"

She looked at him wistfully for a moment. He was condemning her to long days of idleness, to constant uneasiness and

self-reproach on his behalf, to a certain loss of self-respect. But self-sacrifice was instinctive with her.

"Very well!" she said simply.

The little victory, the assertion of authority restored Julian's spirits completely, and he plunged into discursive talk more or less egotistical. It was all necessarily founded on falsehood, and it would have been a delicate question to decide when his talk ceased to be consciously untruthful, and became the expression of a fictitious Julian in whom the real Julian absolutely believed.

The afternoon wore on; the winter twilight fell, bringing with it a slight return of the fog of the morning; two hours had passed before Julian moved reluctantly, and said that he must go.

"I shall come to-morrow!" he said, taking her face between his hands and kissing it. "We'll go out into the country if it's fine. I wish it was summer-time! Have you ever seen the river, Clemence?"

"Not in the country," she said. "It must be nice! How much you've seen! Do you know I often think that you must wish sometimes I was a lady! I don't know anything and I haven't seen anything, and——" she faltered, and he rose, laughing and drawing her up into his arms.

"Any one can know things," he said lightly, "and any one can see things. But no one but you can be Clemence! Do you see? Oh, what a bore it is to have to go!"

He was lingering, undecidedly, as though a little pressure would have scattered his resolution to the winds, and seated him once more in the chair he had just quitted. But, since he had said that he must go, it never occurred to Clemence to ask him to stay. If it were not his duty he would never leave her. If it was his duty now, how could she hold him back!

"To-morrow will come!" she said, looking into his face with a brave smile.

"I don't believe you want me to stay!" he returned, half laughing, half vexed.

"Don't I?" she said simply, and he caught her in his arms again.

"What a shame!" he said. "There, good-bye! Are you coming to the door?"

She shook her head.

"I'll stay here," she said; "and watch you from the window. I see you farther so. Ah, it's rather foggy! I'm so sorry! You'll look up! Good-bye!"

She lifted her face to his and kissed him tenderly and shyly, and he left her standing by the window.

Julian ran downstairs, let himself out, and stood for a moment on the doorstep as he realised the disagreeable nature of the atmosphere. At the same instant the door of the house opposite opened, and a man came out, attended to the threshold by a woman. She caught sight of Julian instantly, and said something to the man, as he stood in the shadow, in a deferential whisper. Julian shook himself, confounded the fog, and then glanced up at the window from which the light streamed on his face. He waved his hand, turned away, and walked rapidly down the street, pulling up his coat collar as he went.

As he went, Dennis Falconer slowly descended the two steps of that opposite house, and slowly—very slowly—followed him.

A WESTERN DINNER PARTY.

It might even have been called the dinner party, for it was the only one of the kind I ever went to during the whole of my life out West.

One day E. and I rode over for a change to Sedalia, a small city on the Santa Fé track, across the Divide. We started, after a very early dinner, at eleven a.m., for we both of us wanted to get home betimes, as we had to churn and bake next day. It was a lovely ride across the prairie; rather hot, perhaps, for some people, for there was hardly any shade to be had along the road, which was of the roughest and most primitive description. When we reached the city—every place out West that boasts of a depôt, section-house, store, and water-tank is dignified by the name of a city—all the men, women, and children we met were eating quarters of water-melon as hard as they could, and we felt that reward for our long and dusty ride, in the shape of a big section of melon, was at hand. Evidently there had been a "boom" on melons, for we saw them piled up upon the counters of the stores, and lying in great heaps up at the depôt. Cantaloupes and water-melons both could be bought for a nickel apiece, and a section of the fruit for two cents; and tired and hot as we were after our long ride, we soon "caught on" to the prevailing craze, realising, as we plunged our faces into the cool pink flesh, the truth of the

proverb: "In eating melon, you both eat, drink, and wash your face." The fact was that there had been a fruit train wrecked below the city, and sooner than wait to carry such perishable freight on to its destination, it had been almost given away. How we wished we had not been riding; we could have packed the buggy with fruit for a mere song, and revelled in it to our hearts' content, and even have made no end of sweet pickle out of the rind, but these things were not to be. However, we each invested in a couple, determined to convey them home somehow. This was a pretty good allowance for two women on horseback, especially as some of the melons were so large that one arm had to be given up entirely to them. Then, having thoroughly refreshed the horses and ourselves, and bought a twenty-five cent novel each, we set off home again, E. suggesting that we should call on the way at "Wild Cat Ranch," and visit Mr. Ffrench. This I was very glad to do, having heard so much of the gentleman in question, who was quite the character of our little English community. He had the reputation of being the cleanest, and yet the dirtiest, man in the district, had never been seen with a hat on his head, no matter in what extreme of heat or cold, and, in consequence, had got his face tanned to the colour of mahogany, lighted up by a pair of keen blue eyes. Moreover, I was told he belonged to a good old English family—of course, his real name is not given here—and was, besides, a very clever man with a good college degree, and a fine classical scholar. One could not help wondering what such a man was doing out on the Western prairie, for he had no ranch attached to his house, and was neither rich in cattle, real estate, nor mines. He had a very good shanty and grounds, so E. said, and what was for those parts a fairly good income, supplied by his friends in the old country; and besides all this he had, what we all thought much more of, a lovely, irrigated garden, where he grew all kinds of English flowers and fruit.

No one quite knew the reason of his exile, although, of course, there were many rumours afloat, scandal being rife in all countries, old or new. To speak from personal knowledge, E. said he had the kindest heart, and was very good to all the children on the different ranches around, although his many strange ways were against him.

With Mr. Ffrench at present lived another queer bird, the kindest old soul I ever met, Walters by name, but always called Benny. These two were great friends, and when times were bad, and the remittances from home slow in coming, would try many ways to earn the needful dollar. Once Benny and a chum even hawked fish round Denver City, and a friend who went to see them found the fish and themselves living in one room in company with a big fire. They regaled him with haddock for breakfast, salmon for dinner, and white-fish for supper, but after a few days of exclusively fish diet, he concluded that he had had enough, and took the cars home. Benny also had friends in the old country, but his was a very poor allowance indeed, and as soon as it arrived he went to Denver, took up his abode at Charpiôt's, and spent his substance, not in riotous living, but on horse-racing, of which he was inordinately fond, and at which he was proverbially unlucky.

Benny, however, was an universal favourite, and was allowed the run of his teeth at Charpiôt's, until some kind friend would put him on the cars and frank him home again. Unlike Mr. Ffrench, he was the soul of neatness, and very particular about his personal appearance; he had the happiest, most contented of dispositions, and would walk miles across the prairie—poor Benny never attained to a horse, and I need hardly say what that meant out West—to see his friends, who were always pleased to put up the happy, contented little man for weeks together. When times were very bad he would board round at the different ranches, doing odd jobs and chores for his "grub stakes," i.e. keep.

Now he had taken up his abode with Mr. Ffrench, and seemed happy enough, yet E. said her heart used to ache for poor Benny at times, thinking what would become of him in his old age. E. told me all this on our way home; and a funny couple we must have looked, having many groceries tied up in gunny-sacks hanging on to our saddles, whilst we had cleverly disposed of our water-melons in two of the same useful receptacles, tied round our waists to prevent their getting bruised against the saddle during the long ride home. Altogether we must have looked, had there been any one to see us, like a couple of female John Gilpins.

When we arrived at Mr. Ffrench's I little guessed the treat in store for me,

and could nearly have cried with joy when we rode up to the gate. For there in front of us lay a veritable English garden, with all the dear old country flowers in it. There was a well-kept path up the middle with a long border on each side, and a lovely green plot of grass, with a bed in the centre, so different, with its soft green turf, to the parched-up prairie grass we had been riding over. There were roses, fringed pinks, hollyhocks, marigolds, and great clusters of mignonette; whilst the bordering was made of pink-and-white hen-and-chicken daisies. E. and I looked first at the flowers, then at each other, and then at the flowers again; and although neither of us spoke, I knew our thoughts had taken a long journey.

At last we came back to every-day life, and looked round for the owner of this earthly paradise. The shanty was a good one, but much the same as all the others on the ranches round us, bar the garden; but a great zinc water-tank, about five feet high, at a little distance off, with a garden hose attached to it, gave the secret of all the verdancy around us; although there was nothing to be seen of any human being. Inside the tank an energetic splashing was going on at intervals, and I was very much surprised when E. called out:

"Hi! Mr. Ffrench, will you come here? I want you, please." And still more surprised when she turned to me. "He's in the tank, I guess; he is always bathing!"

And sure enough in a moment or two a head was upraised over the top of the tank, and a voice said, to my horror:

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mrs. S.? Wait a minute, and I'll get out and come along to you."

This was truly a wonderful country I had come to, but I was there to take things as they came, so waited meekly for the sequence of events, E. exclaiming, as she saw my astonished face, and gasping out between her laughter:

"You'll be the death of me, Mollie; he—he always tubs with all his clothes on."

This was indeed a relief to my mind; but how was I to have known it? And presently a dripping figure, perfectly clothed, with the exception of shoes and stockings, came up the garden path towards us. His short hair stood up all over his head, and a water-drop stood on end on every spike of it; his complexion was tanned to a golden brown, whilst

as for his clothes, the less said about them the better. Suffice it to remark that what they lacked in buttons they made up for in small pieces of baling wire, which served to keep the garments in question together. As for his feet, they were guiltless of any covering at all, and looked—well, they did not look as if the bath had been an unnecessary luxury. Up the path he came, dripping at every step, but perfectly at ease and composed.

"Sorry I can't ask you in now, Mrs. S.," he said, "but the fact is, I am rather damp. You and your friend must come some other day and dine with me; I should like her to visit me."

E.'s face beamed; this was indeed an honour; and as for me, I was devoured with curiosity to see the inside of his shanty, so we eagerly accepted the invitation, fixing that day week as the date.

Then we said good-bye, and prepared to ride off. Mr. Ffrench, with perfect courtliness, barefooted and dripping as he was, presented us with a flower apiece, and treated us to an elegant bow as we departed, much interested with our adventure. As for the boys, when we got home and informed them of the invitation we had received to dinner at Wild Cat Ranch that day week, they simply roared with laughter.

That day week I was over quite early at E.'s, having done all my work, and baked a pie for the boys, who were to batch, as E. was going to drive me over to Mr. Ffrench's in her buggy, and I was to return and spend the night with her. So we started about nine o'clock, fully determined to enjoy ourselves, and take our time on the way; a lunch-basket, thoughtfully provided by E., occupying the back seat.

When we arrived we saw nothing of either of our hosts; but a neighbouring ranchman, who took our buggy, asked us to "go right away in and lay off our hats." We loitered, however, a little in the garden; it was such a treat to see all the home flowers again. There, in the verandah also, was Mr. Ffrench's bed—for in summer-time he always slept in the open—and by the side of it were a whole heap of "Nineteenth Centuries," and out of curiosity I lifted up the top one and looked at the date; it was the current number for the month. Then we went into the parlour, where, to our great surprise, the table was most beautifully laid for dinner—fine damask and china, real

silver forks and spoons, and sparkling glass.

In the middle was a large glass épergne of flowers, beautifully arranged, but nothing was to be seen of either Mr. Ffrench or Benny, except two suits of cloth clothes neatly folded up and laid upon a couple of chairs by the door. There was plenty of fruit upon the table, a Cantelupe melon, great bunches of Concord grapes, with their peculiar musky fragrance, and a big dish of San Louis peaches, far preferable to my mind to the Californian peaches, on account of the woolly skins of the latter. For sweets there were a couple of tarts which E. and I decided, from the look of the paste, must have come from the Sedalia bakehouse; a rich golden pumpkin pie, and four large glass finger-bowls full of the thickest cream. The table was certainly beautifully appointed; no butler in the old country could have laid it better.

It was in great contrast to the rest of the room, for the less said about the state of that the better, although it was easy to see it had had a hasty and perfunctory tidy up. Over the fireplace, which looked as if it had not been blacked for ages, were a couple of old shot-guns, whilst the mantel-piece rejoiced in a box of matches, a pot of vaseline, a very dirty sporting calendar, and a beautiful Crown Derby teacup with a rose in it. Both E. and myself agreed it was really little short of wickedness to use such a teacup, with its proper mark on it too, for flowers.

The chairs and tables left much to be desired in the way of dusting, but the opposite side of the room to the fireplace was filled with a bookshelf, containing the grandest collection of books I had seen in any shanty out West. Many of them, too, were beautifully bound, and some had college arms stamped upon them, and the majority of them were not books you would expect to find in a little wooden shanty on a great prairie miles away from any big city.

There must have been nearly five hundred volumes there, and they were not all "ancient history" either, but the newest philosophical and scientific works of the day were there also. Several good prints adorned the walls, and one wondered more than ever what manner of man this could be who evidently so keenly appreciated all these things, and yet was content—for in his case it could not be necessity—to live so far away from all centres of

civilisation. Amongst the pictures, too, was the faded photograph of an English country house, standing in a park, with a big lake in the foreground, and a herd of deer feeding amongst the oak-trees and bracken fern; there was no name to it, only a date of sixteen or twenty years ago. Could this be Mr. Ffrench's old home?

Just then the door opened hastily, and two perspiring men in shirt-sleeves rushed in, each bearing a covered dish. These were our hosts, and we prepared to shake hands with them; but to our astonishment, they did not take the slightest notice of us, only placed the things upon the table, brought in two other dishes, and then ran away, each carrying off a suit of clothes with him; we might not have been in the room at all, as far as they were concerned. I turned and looked at E., and we both did a quiet laugh, it was so very comical. But in a very short time the door opened again, and this time two very different men came in, washed, and dressed in European cloth clothes, who greeted us now with much cordiality; they had simply been "incog." during the time they cooked the dinner and dished it up. I am bound to say it was beautifully cooked, too, and very nice, for the covered dishes contained roast turkey and boiled cotton tails, as the humble rabbit is called out West, a dish of butter beans, and one of stuffed tomatoes, whilst the suitable sauces for each dish were not forgotten. One does not mean to be greedy, but there is such a joy in partaking of a meal you have not prepared yourself, that I am bound to say that E. and I played a very good knife and fork, much to the satisfaction of our hosts, who looked delighted to see the good things they had provided so much appreciated. The fruit and vegetables were particularly welcome, and it was, I must say, a pleasant change to sit through a whole meal and not hear the word "cow" once mentioned. It was also a treat to talk to a man like Mr. Ffrench, who seemed to have everything at his fingers' ends, and to be quite up to date with all that was going on in the scientific and literary world—only one wondered and wondered at the pty of it all—whilst little Benny chimed in again and again with some kind little speech. For there seemed to be no interest for one of these men in the life around him. The ranchmen round had their cattle and horses, and though the doings of cow-brutes and the conduct of the section men might not be a

very refining or elevating topic of conversation, still it was real, and their life, which lent a certain dignity to the subject, although I must say, with truth, that I often got very tired of it. But here we all seemed to be living in a dream. E. spoke of the beautiful mountain scenery all round us, of the grandeur of the snowy peaks towering up into the sky. Mr. Ffrench gave a somewhat weary smile, and declared they were greatly over-rated, "and as for mountain scenery, why, my dear Mrs. S., I agree thoroughly with an old lady I met on the Denver and Rio Grande Cars the other day."

"And what did she say?" I asked.

"She was a worthy person," he replied, "whose husband was evidently rushing her through the States on a tour, and when he pointed out the beauties of the Black Cañon to her, she answered rather crossly, I am afraid: 'Give me a nice red 'ouse and a church steeple, 'Ennery, I'm choke-full of scenery!'"

We all laughed at this, although I felt a little awed at hearing my beautiful Snowy Range spoken of so contemptuously. Dinner being now over, we were asked to stroll round the garden whilst the things were cleared away. Needless to say we offered to help wash up, but we were not allowed to do it; all that would be done in the evening, we were told. So we gladly went out and sat in the verandah, which ran the whole front of the house, and over which was trained an English honeysuckle and China roses, whilst morning glory and Virginian creeper were wreathed round the wooden props which held it up, and old fruit-cans planted with gay nasturtiums were poked in amongst the creepers.

In the verandah also was Mr. Ffrench's bed, close to the head of which were a pile of magazines and a pitcher of water, whilst over the bed, against the shanty wall, hung his Winchester. The flower garden led into the kitchen one, equally carefully planted and kept, and as E. and I looked with envy at all the vegetables we mentally registered a vow and solemn intention that we too would have a garden, even if we had to pack water from the creek for it, every evening when we were dog-gone tired! But I am sorry to say that all these good intentions of ours came to nothing, and when I left the State my share in a garden consisted in some weedy mignonette growing in an old jam-pail, whilst E.'s was a box of nasturtiums and morning glory outside her parlour-

window. Just at that time, however, we were wildly enthusiastic over the idea, and I remember the next time I went into our little city trading two of my bracelets to Ed. Abbots for twenty five-dollar shares in the Ouray gold boom, which was just going on; and remarking to E. that when I realised we would have a slap-up garden. But my shares in the mine repose in a glove-box at this present moment, and my bracelets, for all that I know, still adorn the wrists of Ed.'s best girl. And for the prospective garden I do not care a red cent any longer. Those twenty shares, a few skins of bear and coyote, a box-full of rattlesnake skins and rattles, and a handful of smoky topaz, are all I have still to remind me of my time in the far West.

But all this is a digression whilst Messrs. Ffrench and Walters are clearing away the dinner things, and, to our astonishment, bringing out all the dirty dishes and plates, and laying them down upon the grass. I pinched E. and called her attention to this little arrangement. What could these men be about now? But she only shook her head, and we were asked in to coffee and sponge cake, both very good.

So the afternoon went on, and it was time for us to return to our respective homes, and our host asked if we would like a bunch of flowers to take back with us. Of course we should, so he picked up two paper bags, and we followed him out again with joy. First he stopped in front of some roses, but after smelling them walked off without picking one to another bed, this time one of pinks. If we might have no roses we felt that pinks were the next best thing, but to our grief he only touched them lovingly, and passed on to a row of sweet-peas. I can only describe his look here by saying he gloated over the flowers, and in the end the big bunch we had been hoping for resolved itself into a few heads of nasturtiums and sprigs of mignonette, which were put into the paper bags and handed over to us. In the meantime Benny had not been idle, but had filled the back of the buggy with all kinds of vegetables, and I am bound to say that he was far more liberal than his friend; but then the vegetables were not of his growing, and many people are given to liberality with their neighbour's goods. Then we started off on our long drive homewards having thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and the last thing we saw of our hosts was that they were on cleanliness intent as usual, and turning the garden hose on to all the

dirty crockery to wash up the dishes, an idea, I am sure, which would never have struck the female mind.

"It seems an awfully hopeless sort of life," E. said at last, our laugh having died away. "One wonders what the end of it will be, for they do not grow younger as the years go by. Look at Benny living on from ranch to ranch at his time of life just for grub stakes. And oh! how tired he must be of it all, year in, year out, with not a soul belonging to him out here! I wonder sometimes he does not shoot himself in sheer despair. I guess I should." And the energetic little woman whipped up old Nell with such vigour that that easy-going animal looked round at her mistress in mute enquiry, and I murmured something about his going home to his friends in England if he wanted to; I supposed he could do so.

"Could he?" retorted E. "My dear child, if you live long enough in this country you find it becomes like dram-drinking, you cannot do without it. Indeed, it takes such a hold upon you that even if you do go home for a time you find yourself longing, even amongst the decencies and comforts of civilisation, for the wild freedom of Western ways. I suppose, in spite of all the ages there is a great deal of primitive man, say, and woman too left in each one of us, and if once it comes to the top it is mighty hard to push under again. Mind you, I speak from experience. Years back I went home for a spell. I cannot tell you how I enjoyed it all; the freedom from work of a menial kind, the daily luxuries of life that I had never looked upon in the light of a luxury before. I revelled in them all, ran round from friend to friend, and sat for hours in ecstatic leisure with my hands in my lap, having a real lazy time. Then the reaction set in, after a few months, and I began to get what, for want of a better word, I call homesick; the snowy peaks and the mountains haunted my dreams, and I pined for the air blowing across the Great Range. And by the time I had crossed the ocean the roughness and freedom of our life here had taken hold of me again; in fact, now I have put so much of my life in here that I don't care if I see it out. It is all very well for you. You have come out for a certain time, and you take it like a perpetual picnic!"

"Where one is always sure of the weather," I laughed, for it was summer then, and we awoke day after day to

brilliant sunshine and bright blue skies, and had quite forgotten the many cold snaps and heavy snows of the terrible Western winter.

But in spite of E.'s tirade I thought then, as I think now, that the Western life is very hard upon women. They "wrestle" through it like the cattle, it is true, but who shall say at what expense of looks and spirits? Indeed, some seem to be born tired, and never to have time to get rested till they go to their last bed under the cotton-wood trees. The Western girl is pretty and kittenish enough, and very loveable, but the period of girlhood is a very short one; once let that be passed, and she might be any age. In old age a certain grace might return, but speaking personally, I do not remember having ever seen a very old woman out West.

And when one of them has cooked her last dinner and done her last week's wash, and is ready dressed in her Sunday silk for her last waggon-ride, I think the ancient epitaph is the best for her:

Here lies a poor woman, who always was tired,
Who lived in a house where help was not hired,
And who, when she died, said, "Dear friends, I
am going
Where no washing is done and no cooking or
sewing.
But everything there is exact to my wishes,
For where no eating is, is no washing of dishes.
I am going to dwell where loud anthems are
ringing,
But having no voice I'll be quit of the singing.
Don't weep for me now, don't weep for me never,
I'm going to do nothing for ever and ever!"

LANDSLIPS.

THE disaster which has fallen upon Sandgate, one of the quietest and pleasantest of watering-places on the South Coast, can hardly be matched in the annals of the past, as far as these islands are concerned. Earthquakes we have had, and more of them than any one would expect who has not studied the subject, and some even in the present century of a serious character, yet the damage caused by them has been slight, compared with the wreck of the charming little town on the Kentish coast. Indeed, such a landslip, although more limited in range, is more destructive in its effects than an ordinary earthquake shock, which gives people a shake-up, but leaves them practically where they were. But the landslip carries away foundations, superstructures, gardens, shrubs, and trees, involving everything in one common ruin.

Traces of enormous landslips are not

uncommon as features in a landscape, and the agencies at work in levelling the hills and filling up the valleys occasionally give proof of their activity in a very startling manner. It was a tremendous slide of earth that formed the sheltered and romantic district of the Undercliff in the Isle of Wight at some remote period, and in many places round about our coasts, and even in inland districts, are the evidences of extensive movements of the earth in the nature of landslips. But the historic record of such events is very imperfect, and can only be pieced out with fragments. Yet sundry catastrophes of a like character may be recalled, with the common feature of ruin and destruction brought upon people in a way they could not have anticipated or have guarded against by any efforts of their own.

Not exactly a landslip, and yet hardly to be otherwise described, was the curious occurrence in 1668, recorded in the "Philosophical Transactions," by which the parish of Downham, in Suffolk, was overwhelmed and almost destroyed. The surface of a great area of sandy waste, becoming loosened by the action of continuous south-westerly gales, was driven bodily upon the cultivated soil, destroying the corn-lands and driving into the little town; "where it hath buried and destroyed divers houses, and hath forced people to preserve the remainder at a greater cost than they were worth." The other end of the town was even in worse plight, for there many houses were overthrown and buried, and their pastures and meadows destroyed.

Another and an amphibious kind of calamity, neither landslip nor inundation, but partaking of the nature of both, was the bursting of Solway Moss in 1771, when a half-solid flood of peat and bog was poured over the fertile valley in its track. A farmer whose house was destroyed and who had to fly for his life before the advancing wall of mud, declared that his first thought was that his dunghill had broken loose and was advancing against him. Anyhow the torrent covered six hundred acres of good arable land and destroyed sixty or seventy houses, although thanks to the sluggish nature of the invading mixture, no human lives were sacrificed, but of cattle and sheep the loss was great.

Here is the contemporary account of an unmistakable landslip on a large scale, which occurred in 1793 near the village

of Colebrook, now a great centre of ironworks and blast furnaces, but then a thoroughly rural, secluded spot. The scene was a pleasant slope above the River Severn, where a family dwelt in a farmhouse, about five thousand yards distant from the river.

"The man of the house got up about three o'clock in the morning—the season was towards the end of May—but when going to his work, he heard a strange rumbling noise, and felt the ground shake under him, whereupon he roused up all his family. They perceived the ground begin to move, but knew not which way to run. However, they providentially and wonderfully escaped by taking an immediate flight, for just as they got to an adjacent wood, the ground they had left separated from that on which they stood. They first observed a small crack in the ground, about four or five inches wide and a field that was sown with oats, to heave up and roll about like waves of water; the trees moved as if blown with the wind, but the air was calm and serene. The Severn, in which at that time was a considerable flood, was agitated very much, and the current seemed to run upwards. They perceived a great crack run very quick up the ground from the river. Immediately about thirty acres of land, with the hedges and trees standing, except a few that were overturned, moved, with great force and swiftness, towards the Severn, attended with great and uncommon noise, compared to a large flock of sheep running swiftly. That part of the land next the river was a small wood, in which grew twenty large oaks. The wood was pushed with such velocity into the Severn that it forced the water up in columns a considerable height, like mighty fountains, and drove the bed of the river before it. The current being instantly stopped, occasioned a great inundation above, and so sudden a fall below, that many fish were left on dry land, and many barges were heeled over, and when the stream came down were sunk. The river soon took its course over a large meadow, and in three days wore a navigable channel there. Less than a quarter of an hour completed this dreadful scene."

A similar catastrophe had occurred in 1764 at Aston, Gloucester, where a mass of earth sixteen acres in extent, and twenty or thirty feet in depth, slid down from the side of Bredon Hill, burying the neighbouring pastures, and covering up trees,

bushes, fences, and all signs of cultivation under the débris.

A landslip of the same nature as the Colebrook disaster occurred on the sixteenth of April, 1793, when a large plot of ground many acres in extent moved off from its own proper moorings in the parish of Fownhope, in Herefordshire, near the River Wye, and with trees and buildings all standing, slid bodily down into the bed of the river, suddenly diverting its course, and causing much loss and damage.

All these disasters seem to have followed a season of heavy and continuous rains, and the last year of the eighteenth century was marked by extraordinary and long-continued rains, causing floods and inundations in all directions, and bringing about many minor landslips. Of these the most noticeable was the opening of a huge chasm in Bredon Hill, a noted summit lying on the borders of the counties of Gloucester and Worcester. The southern slope of Bredon was the scene of a landslip already noted, while the more precipitous escarpment towards Worcester-shire now seems to have split into a great fissure.

Again in 1804, on the fourth of May, a violent storm of rain and wind was accompanied by the fall of "a vast body of earth from Beechen Cliffs, near Bath, with hideous ruin and combustion;" a thicket of trees and bushes being precipitated into the road below, a movement which suggested to observers of a literary turn the progress of Birnam Wood to Dunsinane. Another serious landslip is recorded in 1816, the scene being in Norway, at Tiller, near Drontheim, where about one hundred and twenty acres of land, with a depth of sixty feet, slipped into the River Nid, near Store Foss. The month was March, more fruitful in such disasters than any other, but although there had been heavy rains previously, a hard frost prevailed at the time of the disaster. The church, the bridge, and farmhouse disappeared, the farmer was killed in trying to rescue his children, and some eighteen others lost their lives either in the landslip or the inundation that followed. Four years later, in 1820, according to the "Annual Register," "the German papers mention that the village of Strau, in Bohemia, situated on a sandhill, was lately swallowed up during the night by the sinking of the hill, whose base had been undermined by the passage of subterranean waters." All the inhabitants escaped, but

hardly a trace remained of the once smiling village.

The gigantic catastrophes recorded from time to time in Alpine regions, the destruction wrought by avalanches or the disruption of glaciers, and the fall of mountains, do not come within our scope. It will be sufficient to mention the fall of the Rossberg mountain behind the Righi in Switzerland in 1806, with great destruction of villages and hamlets and the loss of five hundred lives, and the comparatively recent destruction of Elm, canton of Glarus, where one hundred and fifty inhabitants perished. And the disaster in July last, at St. Gervais, in French Savoy, in which villages and a great hotel were destroyed, with many human victims, will be freshly remembered.

On a much smaller scale is our next catastrophe, but it is nearer home, and its interest is heightened by its connection with the early days of the gifted author of "Jane Eyre." "At Haworth, in Yorkshire," says the laconic chronicle of the event, "the highlands on Stanbury Moor opened into a chasm forming cavities two hundred and six hundred yards in circumference, from which issued two torrents of mud and water, breaking down bridges and overthrowing cottages in their progress. The River Aire was poisoned as far as Leeds, and all the fish destroyed." Now at that time the Rev. Patrick Brontë was perpetual curate of Haworth, a widower with a young family, the eldest, Charlotte, being then eight years old. Mr. Brontë was an eye-witness of the disaster, and improved the occasion in a sermon to his parishioners which was printed, together with a poem he wrote upon the occasion, and was reprinted in 1885 by R. Brown, Haworth. The preacher describes his own feelings of alarm, heightened by the belief that his children were actually on the scene of the portentous outbreak. "I had sent my little children . . . to take an airing on the common. They stayed longer than I expected. . . . I went to an upper window to look for their return. The heavens over the moors were blackening fast . . . I heard a deep distant explosion resembling, yet differing from thunder, and I perceived a gentle tremor in the chamber." The children, as it turned out, had gained a place of safety and shelter before the disaster occurred, which would have been indeed calamitous had it swallowed up "Jane Eyre." Mr. Brontë's poem,

by the way, is not without its vigorous passages :

But, see ! the solid ground like ocean driven
With mighty force by the four winds of heaven,
In strange commotion rolls its earthy tide !

In 1828, on the fourth of March, there occurred a serious landslip and fall of cliff at Hastings, "a quarter of a mile east of the town, just beyond the east wall." In April, 1829, there was a considerable slip and fall of rock at Nottingham. The town is built on sandstone rock, which here and there crops up among houses and gardens, in curious and romantic fashion. Sheltered by a wall of rock, a row of cottages, and a public-house called "The Loggerheads," had stood in safety for generations ; but one fine morning the wall slid down and toppled over, and there was an end of the dwellings in question. All the inmates saved themselves ; but among the debris the coat-tails of a victim were seen protruding. They belonged to a young man who had been passing at the time, and who was dug out insensible, but who eventually recovered.

A really terrible landslip was that of 1839, on Christmas Eve, on the coast of Devon, at a place called Pinney, near Lyme Regis, when three-quarters of a mile of cliff, with fields, houses, trees, and gardens, fell into ruins. Cottagers who had been making merry with distant friends on Christmas Eve, returned to find that not a vestige of their homes remained, nor of the place where they had stood ; all had disappeared in a vast chasm three hundred feet wide and one hundred and fifty feet deep. Another landslip of smaller extent occurred in the same region in the following year.

A landslip on the cliffs between Brighton and Rottingdean, in 1843, carried with it two men who were walking along the heights, and they fell with the falling cliff to a depth of a hundred feet. One man was killed, the other escaped with a few bruises. In the following year, after a wet winter, some three acres of rock and earth, with forty well-grown oak-trees, slid down Dudnor's Hill, at Dormington, in Herefordshire, for a distance of two hundred yards, then all came to a stand on the margin of the River Frome.

The Holmfirth disaster of 1852, which involved the loss of a hundred lives, and destroyed property to the amount of six hundred thousand pounds, was caused by the bursting of a reservoir, and does not come within our category, and when

railway embankments give way, the occurrence is to be classed rather as an engineering disaster than as in the range of natural phenomena. But a heavy fall of chalk in Abbot's Cliff tunnel in January, 1877, followed next day by a serious landslip on the line near Dover, was due rather to natural causes than to any defect in construction. But all traffic between Folkestone and Dover was suspended for several weeks, and omnibuses took the passengers from one place to the other. Later in the same year a curious incident occurred at Camborne, in Cornwall, where the local volunteers had just been dismissed from a full parade on their own ground, when just after the last men had marched off, the whole parade ground disappeared with a terrible noise, and in its place opened out a horrible chasm, one hundred and fifty yards wide, and six hundred feet deep. Presumably the fall was caused by the breaking in of the roof of some abandoned mine, and, doubtless, the measured tramp of the volunteers on the surface had been the immediate cause of the slip.

To complete the record of disastrous landslips we must leave the limits of the British Isles and pass over to Quebec, where in 1889 occurred a landslip below the citadel, in which seven houses were destroyed and thirty-six persons perished. Again, we must take flight across the huge Western continent, to Vancouver's Island, where after a rainy season a block of land slid bodily into the Skeena river, destroying nine houses, and causing the death of forty individuals. Then we may return to our English annals, in which is recorded in August, 1890, a big landslip at Scarborough, where the north-east corner of the Castle Hill tumbled into the sea, but without damage to person and with very little to property.

As we approach the end of the century we come to a sort of premonition of the Sandgate disaster, in a landslip in Elham Valley, near Folkestone, on the night of the twentieth of January, 1891, when a labourer's cottage was driven, by falling earth and snow, across the road into a meadow beyond. Of the sleeping family, father, mother, and an infant were killed, while three other children escaped unhurt.

For the district of chalk and sand, with its bold cliffs and romantic fissures, which give such a charm to the Kentish coast, is not without its experiences of landslips.

At one time or other the old Roman station, *Portus Lemanis*, known in the neighbourhood as *Studfall Castle*, must have experienced a fatal landslip in which were buried half its walls and towers, perhaps choking the river-bed and sending it round by a distant course. But coming to times less remote, yet so long ago as 1801, when *Sandgate Castle* was mounted with guns, and might expect at any time to exchange a shot with a French frigate or privateer, there happened in that year, on the eighth of March, a downfall thus recorded by the chronicler of the period :

"An immense portion of that stupendous eminence, the cliff bordering the sea between *Folkestone* and *Sandgate*, at about a quarter of a mile from the former, suddenly gave way and was precipitated below with great violence, and several smaller fragments have continued falling at various times. The footpath from *Sandgate* to *Folkestone* went across the part destroyed, but happily nobody was passing at the time." And on the other side of *Folkestone*, a new road which had been laid out not many years ago towards the romantic chasm called the *Warren*, was by some movement of the earth altogether crumpled up and destroyed.

But the recent landslip at *Sandgate* is unexampled in the greatness of its effects. On a barren hillside the earth-slide would not have been of much consequence, but coming upon a thriving little town and utterly dismantling and ruining the best part of it, the disaster becomes something terrible, especially to those who, like the greater part of mankind, can only make both ends meet with extreme difficulty. Three-quarters of a mile of sea-front drawn forward like a strip of carpet, and crumpling up and breaking everything it brings with it, terraces, streets, villas, forms a disaster of such proportions that only national aid can repair what is really a national calamity. There was nothing about *Sandgate* to suggest the danger of such a catastrophe. The town had grown and increased, and had become a picture of brightness and verdure, but it was no latter-day watering-place, got up by speculators and builders. When *Folkestone* was, if not a fuzzy down, yet a very small and fishy town with a silted-up harbour, and narrow streets festooned with dried dabs, *Sandgate* was a neat little watering-place, not much known to Londoners, but the resort of gentle and simple from the county of Kent. To place little *Sandgate* in

a way to regain its former state of quiet prosperity and independence, is a matter surely not beyond the resources of this great and wealthy country. There is a feeling, too, among the people of the neighbourhood, that the action of the *Trinity Board* in blowing up with heavy charges of dynamite the wrecks of the "*Calypso*" and the "*Benvenue*" in the bay before the town, was at all events contributory to the disaster. The earth-waves caused by heavy explosions travel far and have a powerful influence on surrounding strata, and the official dynamiting may have started a landslip which might otherwise not have come off for another hundred years, and perhaps not even then.

--- AIDS TO BEAUTY. ---

WERE I a woman, and were the fairies to offer me the proverbial choice of gifts, I am inclined to think that I should ask from them the gift of perfect beauty. Not that I am quite clear in my own mind what perfect beauty is. What man has not had, at some time or other, an ideal woman of his dreams? Yet what man has been able to put his ideal upon canvas? To speak of describing an ideal woman is almost to speak of an absurdity. One has read, in poetry and in prose, abundant descriptions—some of them well done—of women whose beauty, according to their describers, was like unto a dream. Who, as the modern phrase has it, has been able to materialise one of the women who have been so described? It is notorious that no author has been satisfied with a mere artist's reproduction of his lovely heroine. The truth is that though his own fancy may have painted her, his command of language was, necessarily, inadequate to give us just the woman as she was to him.

If you have been—as one may venture to hope you have been—a student of fairy tales, you will have noticed how most of the gifts which the fairies have bestowed have turned out to be two-edged swords. To their recipients they have turned out to be the cause, probably, of at least as much pain as joy. The woman on whom the fairy gift of beauty has been conferred must, in the ordinary course of things, certainly come to learn how true this is. The hour in which this truth will especially come home to her will be the hour in which she begins to realise that beauty—even

beauty such as hers—must fade. One can conceive of few moments more pathetic than those moments in which the woman whose beauty has witched the world, confronted by the uncompromising fidelity of her mirror, is compelled to own, even to herself, that the power by means of which she won her empire is already on the wane. No wonder that she resorts to artifices. No wonder that she tightly shuts her lips, and metaphorically sets her back against the wall, and tells herself that so long as art can do anything to arrest the decay of nature, or even to conceal the ravages which time has made, she will not resign her sway—no, not to the youngest and freshest rival of them all. This is the time when she begins to talk of “chits,” and the insanity of early maidenhood, and to hint that only a woman of a certain age is a fit companion for a man.

One may be disposed to forgive the woman who has been beautiful, if, in her desperate attempts to retain her beauty, she paints and powders, and chooses to make of herself a thing of borrowed shreds and patches. But when women tell us—as some of them do tell us now and then—that men like a woman to caricature her own womanhood; that they prefer—it comes to that!—imitation beauty to the real article, they require of us a faith too great for ordinary human nature. To be told, as I was told a little time ago—and by a lady—that men do not care for women unless they paint and powder, is to have too strong a strain placed upon one's natural civility. That this same informant was guilty of a perhaps pardonable feminine exaggeration, when she declared that, nowadays, all women used both paint and powder, I am assured. Had she confined herself to the statement that a very large number of women are indebted, for what they call their charms, to anything but nature, she would have delivered herself of an utterance on the literal veracity of which she might safely have staked, as our transatlantic cousins have it, her “bottom dollar.”

The lady of fashion may not be aware that she is guilty of a reversion to savagery when she calls in artificial aids to the help of her natural attractions; but she is. Among savage peoples it is an almost general custom to revert to such auxiliaries. The South Sea cannibal, who tattoos his body with hideous devices, only does, in his way, what the lady of fashion does in hers. He endeavours to make himself

more beautiful. It may be doubted if he fails more egregiously than the average painted lady. In front of one there lies a heap of so-called fashion papers. They are full of advertisements of “aids to beauty.” One supposes that these things must sell, or they would scarcely be so largely advertised. There are hair dyes. One has reason to believe that these are not popular only among members of the other sex. A Government return giving an exact statement of the sale, during a single period of twelve months, of hair dye in the United Kingdom, would be an interesting document. Judging from the amount spent on advertising the various preparations, the sale must be enormous. Did anybody ever see hair which had been dyed, which did not advertise the fact as glaringly as any newspaper advertisement? Do those who dye their hair desire to advertise? Do they like that peculiar form of notoriety? There are many men in the world, and many tastes, but what a curious taste is theirs!

One finds among the advertisements of “aids to beauty,” that preparations are obtainable for the prevention of wrinkles and crow's-feet. Is it possible that any creature, with any claim to civilisation, can believe that a harmless chemical preparation can smooth out, or ward off, the wrinkles with which time marks the passage of the years? Consider also the nose-machines, freckle powders, ear-improvers, depilatories, patent articles which are warranted to change, on the instant, as with the stroke of a magician's wand, thin faces into plump ones, decoctions which will give light and brightness to the eyes—there is no defect in nature which these advertisers, if we can believe them, will not make good.

Beauty! Is beauty to be obtained like this? When will women—and, oftentimes, the patrons of these “aids to beauty” are our own wives and daughters—learn that there is a beauty in advancing age? That, at any rate, there is a greater beauty in honest age than in dishonest youth. The woman of forty-five who, while, as she has a right to do, and ought to do, she makes the best of herself, still makes no attempt to conceal her five-and-forty years, is far more attractive than the woman of forty-five who, by means of “aids to beauty,” seeks to pass as twenty. I, for my part, cannot conceive it otherwise. I never encountered a case, within my own experience, which did not go to

prove my point. As for the young girls who smother themselves with powder, or daub themselves with rouge, in their diseased anxiety to be what they are not, it is these girls who make old age so hideous, and who make of womanhood a mockery and a gibe.

I do not know in what beauty does consist. I find that what Jones deems beauty does not, necessarily, seem beautiful to me. And the case sometimes stands the other way. In the woman who to me seems beautiful, Jones perceives no charm. But on one point I have reason to know that Jones and I are both agreed—that there is no beauty where there is no cleanliness; that a woman must be sweet, in a physical as well as in a moral, and in a sentimental, sense. The woman who uses “aids to beauty” never can be sweet—never! The stuff with which she conceals herself may seem sweet; but the skin which it conceals—never! It must be flavoured, more or less, with the refuse of bygone “aids to beauty.” There is, in one of the fashion papers which lies in front of me, an answer to a correspondent, which throws a lurid light on the subject of artificial beauty versus natural cleanliness. The correspondent has apparently asked a question about what is called “face enamelling.” In the answer she is told that, if her face is properly “enamelled,” the “enamel” ought not to require renewing more than once or twice a year. Think what that means. Think of having one’s face entirely covered with a preparation of plaster, which, if properly laid on, need not be renewed—possibly, even, not retouched, to clean—more than once or twice a year. How can a woman, who submits herself to such a process, in any possible sense of the word, be sweet?

You say that this is an extreme case. We will hope so. Though the woman who “powders” her face practically “enamels” herself, though she may not carry the process quite to the bitter end. In what the charm consists, of “powder” on a woman’s face, I never could understand. What is it used for? One sometimes sees young women, young girls, in fact, the modest daughters of decent folk, with powder laid so thick upon their faces that one wonders by what means they prevent its falling off. They look ghastly objects, to me. As for kissing them—and one supposes that all women, at some period of their lives, do like to be kissed—fancy pressing one’s lips

into a powder-box! Has the modern young gentleman of fashion advanced so far as to have imbibed a taste for that?

We must all of us have met the woman who always carries a powder-puff in her pocket. Directly she finds herself alone, she dabs it on her face. There are ladies who always carry a “toilet-box”—actors and actresses would more correctly call it a “make-up” box—with them in their carriages. As they pass from house to house, they add a shade of colour here, tone down a shade of colour there. One cannot but suspect that the present rage for darkened rooms has something to do with “aids to beauty.” Small wonder that the women whose complexions will not wash, favour an “artistic” light! All the resources of every sort of art must be summoned to their aid, if they are to attain salvation. They hope to be able to pass muster “in the dark, with a light behind them.” They know too well that honest daylight will make it obvious what painted things they are.

It may be a consolation to some folks to be able to reflect that none of these things are new. Probably “aids to beauty” were in existence, and in common use, before the Flood. Certainly our great-grandmothers, and our great-great-grandmothers, were some of the most painted things that ever were. And there were men, even in those days, who cried out “Fie, for shame!” It is an old tale, which is always being told over and over again. When one hears, and reads, of the march of progress and of the advance of civilisation, surely one may be forgiven if one is moved to smile. As a matter of fact, we are pretty well where our fathers were. True, nowadays we have electricity, and steam, and gas. Inanimate things may have changed, but hardly men. And women still paint their faces as of old. The same motive prompted them then which prompts them now—the desire to stand well in the eyes of men.

What have women not done to enable them to do that? It is true enough that men desire, always have desired, and always will desire to stand well in the eyes of women. But with men, that is not the first and paramount desire of their lives; that is not the end and aim of all their being. Did you ever know a man who cared for nothing but pleasing women? How many women there are who care for nothing but pleasing men! Here it is not charged against them as a fault, it is

merely stated as a fact. How often has a woman not told you that some other woman, whose name has been mentioned, cares only for men? You are singular if you have never been the subject of such a confidence. Women themselves admit it of themselves. If they did not, we have eyes which enable us to see. Men constantly get on, and get on very well indeed, without having any sort of intercourse with women. Women themselves will be the first to tell you how dull it is without a man about the place.

Whenever I see a painted, or a powdered, girl or woman, I am apt to wonder for whom the trap is laid; if she has some particular victim already in her eye. If the woman is a married woman, I take it for granted that the intended victim can scarcely be her husband. One can hardly conceive of a husband, who loves his wife, desiring her to paint her cheeks, or kohl her eyebrows, or belladonna her eyes, for the sake of pleasing him. For my part, I find it difficult to imagine any circumstances in which such a husband would desire his wife to conceal her own charms even under a shower of powder. For whom, then, does the married painted lady paint? I wonder! When such an one comes across my path, I am, as a rule, inclined to suspect that hers has been the sort of marriage which spells failure. Was there ever a woman, who was happy as a mother and a wife, who was content to let her children know that their mother's face was painted? If a woman paints before her marriage, probably, as is the case with the habitual dram-drinker, she finds it difficult to leave the habit off. In that case, she merits the sympathy which the world accords the dipsomaniac. Her lot is hard. Can one conceive a true woman, a true mother, kissing and fondling her baby, with painted lips and powdered face? To me, the idea is almost disgusting.

That is one of the charms of "aids to beauty." Like the drunkard, whose thirst increases, a woman wants more and more of them. The young girl who commences with violet powder, by degrees requires a touch of rouge upon her cheeks, and something to give her lips a shade of colour. Cosmetics are never harmless—in the real sense of harmlessness. There seem to be two sorts of truth in this strange world: the sort of truth which proceeds from the lips of decent men and women, which is truth; and the sort of truth which one

too often finds in advertisements, which is lies. The advertisement which asserts that such and such a cosmetic is entirely harmless, is an illustration of this latter sort of truth. It is a nice question in morals, how one ought to regard such an advertiser. One could scarcely, nowadays, expect such a person to inform the world—and to pay for such information, out of his own pocket, by the line—that the stuff he advertises would play the mischief with the face of any woman who was fool enough to use it. The secret of the present enormous sale of cosmetics, in a measure, lies in the fact that the people who once begin to use them, can never leave them off. If a woman who has used cosmetics regularly for, say, five years, were suddenly to make up her mind never to use them more, what a thing of horror she would be! She would be a bold woman who, under such circumstances, would venture to, literally, show her face to her acquaintance or to her friends.

It may be doubted if cosmetics are not more insidious than either drugs or drink. The large majority of the people who, in the teetotaler's sense, drink, never drink immoderately. I doubt if the majority of the women who use cosmetics, practise moderation. It is no use for Dolly, or Lily, or any of our numerous daughters, to tell us that they "only" use a sprinkling of powder—because "everybody does it." If they once begin to powder, at the very least, they will always have to powder. They will be fortunate if they do not have to finish with "enamelling."

I have, now and then, had to attend weddings—other people's as well as my own. I have seen "blushing brides" standing at the altar, powdered up to the eyes. Talk of "bridal bloom." That sort of thing seems, to me, to be carrying the metaphor almost too far. The incongruity is not only grotesque, it is revolting. Each man has his own ideas of marriage. Possibly some men have no objection to a "powdered" bride. For my part, I doubt if many "powder" marriages are made in heaven. Surely if there is a moment in which a woman should appear, and be, her own true self unto a man, it is the moment in which she calls on God to witness her willing consecration of herself to the duties of a wife, at what is supposed to be His altar. What poll-parrot balderdash the marriage service must be to the "powdered" bride!

A woman once told me that, in theory,

men make a great deal of fuss about the sort of thing about which I am making a fuss just now, but that, in practice, some of the most popular, brightest, and cleverest women in society were among those who made no secret of the fact that they relied for their personal attractions upon "aids to beauty." I felt, and I feel, that this was true. And when she went on to ask me if I had never known such an one myself, I unhesitatingly admitted that I had. I fancy that I rather took the wind out of her sails, as regards the point of the argument towards which she was endeavouring to steer, when I went on to add that I had known many a popular, bright, and clever man who was as false outside as he was in.

A man, or a woman, may be popular, bright, and clever, and be universally admitted to be all these, but it by no means therefore follows that one would desire to have such a person always at one's side. That woman is happiest, let them say no who will, who finds a true mate with whom to share her life. One may lay it down, almost as an axiom, that no true man would wish to wed a painted woman, or, indeed, any girl or woman who patronises "aids to beauty." That men do marry such women is, of course, a matter of notoriety. But what sort of men are they, and what sort of marriages? Sharp marries Miss Powderpuff. Miss Powderpuff has—how many hundred, or thousand, pounds a year? One may be forgiven for suspecting that Sharp marries those hundreds, or thousands, and not Miss Powderpuff. Noodle marries Miss Coralips. They say that Miss Coralips powdered her cheeks even in the nursery. But everybody knows that, mentally, morally, and physically, Noodle would be grossly flattered were one to accept him as a type of the Missing Link. Old Doty marries that frisky widow, Mrs. Kohled. Does not the world exclaim, with well-placed sympathy, Alas, poor Doty! Now and then powdered girls, and painted women, have been married for the sake of uniting two estates, or two incomes, or two social or business interests. Occasionally such girls and women have been married for the sake of getting a leg up the social ladder. One sort of marriage I cannot credit that they have ever made. I doubt if a man, that was a man, who, as Wordsworth puts it, still felt his "life in every limb," and whose respect for, and belief in, feminine purity and clean-

liness was not wholly dead, ever, for love's sake, married a painted woman.

When one marries, one desires to have some sort of faint idea of who it is, and of what it is, one marries. One does not care to have to wonder what has become of her complexion, of her eyelashes, of her eyebrows, of the rich red colour that was on her lips. One does not even like to have to speculate as to the whereabouts of the luxuriant glory of her hair. One does not mind observing the artistic skill with which "aids to beauty" have been resorted to, say, upon the stage. One may even find a pleasure—of a kind!—in studying their effect in the ball-room, or the drawing-room. But one desires to have no intimate and personal acquaintance with them—for love's sake!—if you please.

A BREAD-AND-BUTTER MISS.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN I made my appearance in the dining-room I found that Sir John had been as good as his word, and had given his abridged version of our adventures, which was still being discussed by the rest of the company. Cara's mind seemed chiefly exercised on the subject of Quick-silver.

"I do hope he is not seriously injured," she was saying. "There is not one of my relations that I couldn't do without better than that cob—and very few of my friends."

"I don't think you need be anxious about him," returned Sir John soothingly. "The lameness was really very slight, but knowing what a favourite he was, I thought it wiser not to risk the long journey."

"I can't understand," put in Joey, who had a nasty habit of trying to pick holes in plausible explanations—"I can't now understand how it was that you did not get home earlier. The only train you could possibly have come by was the five thirty-five from Halesford. I should have thought you ought to have been home two hours ago."

At this remark I felt myself getting crimson, and bitterly regretted that I had not insisted the whole truth should be told. But Sir John was quite equal to the occasion.

"Of course we ought," he replied glibly.

"But the train was late to begin with, and when we got to Hornby the dog-cart was out. We had to wait till it came in, and then the horse scarcely had a leg to stand upon."

This explanation appeared to satisfy everybody, even Joey. Only Lady Downham remarked with her little disdainful smile:

"I never heard of such a series of undeserved misfortunes—out of a novel."

I found myself, as usual, seated next to Sir John, but with Sereno on my other hand. Having had more than enough of the society of my late companion, I began to talk to the tenor with feverish eagerness.

"Please don't notice how much I eat, M. Sereno," I said. "Remember, I haven't tasted food since two o'clock, and now you have had half an hour's start of me."

"Oh, it's quite a treat to see a natural appetite," he returned. "I can't remember the time when mine was not artificial. But, like false teeth, it seems to answer just as well, if not better, than the genuine article."

I smiled appreciatively. If only he would go on talking I should be saved from the awkwardness of sitting silent, or speaking to Sir John. I was dimly conscious that Sereno looked at me with more interest than he was wont to bestow upon so insignificant a personage.

"Your long fast seems to have agreed with you," he remarked. "We would all go without our tea if we could be sure that such abstinence would have the same effect upon our complexions."

"Oh, coming into this hot room after being out in the air all day has made my face burn," I said, putting up a hand to my hot cheeks. "I suppose I'm the colour of a fine healthy beetroot?"

"I'll lend you my eyes as a looking-glass," he returned, with an expressive glance. "If you look close enough, you'll see two miniature portraits of yourself."

"Oh, thank you!" I said, in some embarrassment. "But I think I can see myself better in this spoon."

I took up my dessert-spoon, and gazed at the distorted image of my own features. Sereno threw back his head and laughed.

"Upon my word, you are complimentary," he exclaimed. "I can't say I admire your taste. You won't find that spoon such a flattering mirror as the other one."

At this application of my innocent re-

mark, I felt myself turning a livelier crimson than before.

"I am not going to talk any more," I said, trying to assume a dignified attitude. "I cannot attend properly to anything but my dinner."

In the drawing-room after dinner the social atmosphere seemed to me rather condensed. Cara was discussing the latest piece of society scandal with Lady Downham, and Mrs. Wynscoth was hopelessly monosyllabic in response to all attempts at conversation. Trix Haughton had gone to the billiard-room, where Captain Ayrton usually joined her for his after-dinner cigarette.

With an unaccustomed feeling of loneliness and depression I retired to a corner of one of the window-seats, and wished myself at home. I had time to grow heartily tired of my own society before the men came in from the dining-room. Sereno, who usually took very little notice of me, was the first to find his way into my corner.

"You look like a feminine version of 'Little Jack Horner,' minus the pie," he said. "Minus also the same grounds for self-laudation. You couldn't say: 'What a good girl am I,' could you?"

"Why not?" I asked.

"I leave the answer to your own conscience," he replied solemnly.

There was a pause. The tenor had never been a favourite of mine, partly because I had always felt a vague distrust of him, partly because, hitherto, he had always treated me as if I were a little girl.

"Miss Western," he went on irrelevantly, "did you know there was an aloe in blossom in the conservatory?"

"No," I exclaimed, with genuine interest. "I didn't know there was an aloe there at all. When did it come out?"

"Early this morning," he answered seriously. "You know they go off with a report. I heard it go pop when I was dressing this morning, and I thought some one must be having champagne at that unhallowed hour. But would you like to come and see it? You won't have the chance again for another hundred years, you know."

"Oh, yes, I should," I said. "I have never seen an aloe."

The drawing-room opened into the conservatory, which was lighted with Chinese lanterns, and fitted up with comfortable little seats for two only. Sereno conducted

me to the further end of the building, and paused before a stand on which was a large and not particularly inviting-looking cactus, with blossoms that had already seen better days.

"Allow me to introduce you to this aloe," he said.

"But that's not an aloe," I exclaimed in disappointment. "That's only a cactus, and it was out days ago. Why, the flowers are beginning to drop already."

"Well, never mind; it will be all the same a hundred years hence," he rejoined soothingly. "You didn't really suppose I brought you here to look at an aloe, did you?"

"Yes, of course I did," I replied. "You said so."

He laughed.

"You are a marvellous little actress," he remarked. "You took us all in, even me. But having once dropped the mask, don't you think it's rather late to put it on again?"

"I haven't the least idea what you're talking about," I said in some alarm, for I thought he must either have had too much champagne, or else have taken leave of his senses. "I am going back to the drawing-room."

"Now don't be unkind. I don't ask for a tête-à-tête of half a day, but you might give me half an hour. Sit down here," he continued, pointing to a seat behind the flower-stand. "That vegetable may not be an aloe, but I expect it has played gooseberry for a couple before now."

I made no reply, but turned to go back to the drawing-room. Seeing that I was in earnest, the spoilt society pet lost his temper.

"You little coquette!" he exclaimed. "Do you think you can play fast and loose with me?"

As he spoke, he put his arm round my waist, and tried to make me sit down on the bench. But long walks, lawn-tennis, and plain fare are promoters of better physical condition than heavy dinners, unlimited cigarettes, and the exercise of the billiard-table; consequently, I was more than a match for the tenor. I wrenched myself free from him with a force that sent him staggering against the flower-stand. As I fled out of the nearest door which led into the hall I heard a crash, and looking over my shoulder, saw Sereno, the stand, and the cactus all in a heap on the floor together. I did not wait to pick

up the bits, but rushed headlong across the hall, and was only stopped in my wild career by coming violently in contact with somebody who had just stepped out of the smoking-room.

"Good heavens, Miss Western!" said Mr. Colthurst's voice. "What is the matter? Has anything happened?"

"Oh, nothing," I answered vaguely, for I was half-dazed by the shock. "I was only—running."

"Yes, that was very evident," he said, smiling. "And when you run you are nearly as dangerous to life and limb as the Dane himself. But," he added in more serious tones, "you are as white as death, and trembling from head to foot. Come into the library and sit down for a minute. I can see you have been frightened. I should like to know what or who frightened you?"

"Oh, nothing—nobody," I said, as I sank with a sigh of relief into a comfortable arm-chair. For some reason that I could not explain even to myself, Mr. Colthurst's mere presence inspired me with a feeling of confidence and security that was doubly refreshing after my recent unfortunate experiences.

"Now, you are trying to put me off," he said gently, in answer to my last words. "And you know you always tell me the exact truth. Don't give up that excellent habit now, or I shall think your experience of the world has really spoilt you."

"I did not mean to say what was not true," I answered. "I spoke without thinking. You were quite right—I was frightened, and somebody did frighten me; but I would rather not say who it was."

"Well, without knowing who he is, I can tell you what he is—a cad. I believe he has made you cry. Are those tears in your eyes, or is it only the lamplight?"

"No, it is only the light," I said, turning my head away, for the sympathy in his voice moved me strangely. "And I am so tired! I wish I were at home; I wish I had never come here."

A sudden wave of self-pity came over me, and was answerable for a big tear which, in silent contradiction of my words, rolled down my cheek and fell into my lap. I hoped that Mr. Colthurst might not have noticed it; but that hope was quickly dispelled.

"My poor little child!" he said, kneeling down beside my chair. "If only I had the right to take care of you, that

would be the last tear you should ever shed. Theo, won't you give me that right? You know I love you. Do you think you could ever care for a worthless fellow like me?"

At these words I sat straight up in my chair and gazed at him in genuine amazement.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" I said. "I always liked you very much, but not in that way. And, indeed, I had no idea that you cared about me. Everybody said that you couldn't bear girls."

"Ah, but that was before I knew you," he returned. "There is only one girl in the world for me now, and I love her. Let me ask you just one question," he went on. "Do you like—as you call it—any one else in that way?"

"Oh, no," I replied, with an irrepressible shudder. "I believe I hate every other man in the whole world."

"Well, that's satisfactory, so far," he said. "I know I have spoken too soon. You are still a child, and it is cruel to talk to you of love. But I shall be content to wait if you will let me try to win you. Your heart may be whole, but surely it cannot be so hard that love and devotion may not soften it in time. I am an ugly fellow, and double your age, while the money that is my principal recommendation in other women's eyes is less than nothing in yours. I know there is nothing about me to attract the fancy of a girl like you; the only good thing I have to offer you is my love. Ah, you are trembling still. Theo, if you will give yourself to me, I swear you shall never tremble again."

"I know you are very kind," I said, half-touched by his humility, half-frightened by his passion. "You are quite different from the others. I always felt that I could trust you."

"Then give me a little hope," he went on eagerly. "I have been an idle, good-for-nothing fellow, and only wasted my life hitherto. Only give me a chance, and I will show you that I can become something better than a mere cumberer of the ground. With your help I believe I could do some work in the world."

"I should like to help you," I replied. "But I don't want to be married—at least, not for years."

"You shall never be married if you don't wish it," he rejoined soothingly. "But since you trust me, I want you to agree to something I am going to propose. I want you to let me give out our engage-

ment to-morrow before you leave the house. Don't look so alarmed; I promise you shall not be bound. I will wait a year, two years, longer if need be; and if in the end I fail to win your love, you shall be as free as air. You shall never come to me unless you come willingly. But I have a motive for making this request just now, and it is not altogether a selfish one. Do you agree?"

By this time I had reached the end of my self-command, and the tears were coming unchecked.

"I'll agree to anything," I murmured despairingly, "if you'll only let me go now."

"You poor child, you are quite worn out," he said tenderly. "You must have a good night's rest, or you won't be fit for the journey to-morrow. Remember, you have got some one to take care of you now, some one who won't let you be worried or frightened any more."

He took my hand and kissed it, then led me to the door.

"The coast is clear," he remarked, looking out. "They are all in the drawing-room, shrieking over some idiotic game."

I stole out into the hall, and then, without a glance behind, flew up the stairs and along the corridors to my own room. My mind was so completely in a whirl that I found it almost impossible to realise the change in my own position. As far as I could understand, I had agreed to a nominal engagement with Mr. Colthurst. Of love, in the ordinary sense of the word, I knew as much or as little as most girls of seventeen. I liked Mr. Colthurst, and I felt absolute confidence in him; perhaps, some day, I thought, I might experience for him that strange and apparently uncomfortable feeling of which I had read in novels and poetry. Meanwhile, I consoled myself with his assurance that I was free as long as I desired my freedom.

The following morning was one of general leave-taking and departure. At breakfast plans were being formed for future meetings, invitations given, and time-tables consulted. Under cover of the general confusion I was able to "blush unseen" when Mr. Colthurst entered the room and dropped into a chair at my side. He did not say much, but he seemed to take my cup and plate under his special protection, and even the marmalade, as handed by him, had all the effect of a tender offering.

As it was necessary for me to travel by an early train in order to get to Dewmead in the day, it had been arranged that I should be sent to the station in the dog-cart directly after breakfast. I looked forward to the leave-takings, and to the announcement that was to be made, with a feeling not far short of dread. I retired to my room until I heard the dog-cart at the door, and then descended to the hall, where I found the whole party assembled to see me off. I was just about to begin my farewells when Mr. Colthurst made his appearance, coat on arm and hat in hand.

"Why, Mr. Colthurst," exclaimed Cara, "you look as if you were about to set out on a journey, too. I thought you were not going till this afternoon."

"No, my plans are changed," he replied coolly. "I am going to escort Miss Western home. I want you to congratulate me, please. Theo has consented to be my wife."

This announcement was followed by a moment, that seemed like an hour, of absolute silence. I dared not look up; I hung my head, and felt as guilty as when, in my childish days, I had been discovered in a scrape of more than ordinary magnitude.

Trix Haughton was the first to regain the use of her tongue. She came forward, threw her arms round my neck, and gave me a resounding kiss.

"I congratulate you both with all my heart," she exclaimed. "It's the best piece of news I've heard for a long time. I declare I haven't been so pleased about anything since I was engaged myself."

By this time Cara also had recovered from her astonishment.

"Of course we all congratulate you," she said, in rather acid tones. "But you took us just a little by surprise. You have kept your secret very cleverly; I don't

think any one could possibly have guessed it."

"We didn't know it ourselves until last night," said Mr. Colthurst. "And we agreed not to mention the interesting fact until this morning."

The ice once broken, more congratulations followed. Mrs. Wyncott, who had treated me with studied coldness the preceding evening, seemed in a moment to have regained all her former sweetness.

"I hope I shall see a great deal of you next season," she said, pressing my hand warmly. "Of course you will be presented on your marriage."

"There's plenty of time to think about that," put in Mr. Colthurst hastily, as he perceived the distress in my face, "but we ought to start at once if we mean to catch this train."

As I passed out of the door I heard Sereno murmur with a sneer that was inspired, perhaps, by painful reminiscences of cactus points:

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CHAPTER XIX.

"GOOD-BYE! So glad to have seen you! What, dear Mrs. Ponsonby, are you going to run away too? So kind of you to come out on such an afternoon! Good-bye!"

It was a Friday afternoon, and Friday was Mrs. Romaine's "day." This particular Friday had been about as unpleasant, atmospherically, as it is possible for even a November day to be, short of actual dense fog; it had been very dark, and a drizzling rain—a dirty rain too—had fallen unceasingly. Under these circumstances it was rather surprising that any one should have ventured out, even in the most luxurious brougham, than that Mrs. Romaine's visitors should have been comparatively few in number.

The departure of the ladies to whom her farewells had been spoken, and with whom she had been exchanging social commonplaces for the last quarter of an hour, left her alone; and as she returned to her chair by the dainty tea-table and poured herself out a cup of tea, she had apparently very little expectation of further callers, though it was only just past five o'clock; for when the door-bell rang a few minutes later she paused, and a look of surprise crossed her face. She put down her cup with a little sigh, which was more a concession made to the dictum of conventionality that callers are a bore than an expression of real feeling; and then, as the door opened, she rose

with a touch of genuine satisfaction behind the superficial delight of her manner.

"My dear Mrs. Pomeroy!" she exclaimed. "How sweet of you to come out on such a shocking day! Really, you must have had an intuition of my forlorn condition, I think! Maud, dear, how are you?"

She had given her left hand to the girl in a familiar, caressing way as she retained Mrs. Pomeroy's right hand, and now she drew the elder lady with charming insistence towards a large, inviting-looking chair, indicating to the daughter with a pretty gesture that she was to take a low seat near the table.

"It is an ill wind that blows no one any good!" she continued gaily, as Mrs. Pomeroy greeted her placidly. "It is really too delightful to get you all to myself like this! How seldom one gets the chance of a cosy chat. And how very seldom it comes with the people of all others with whom one would thoroughly enjoy it! You'll have some tea, won't you—oh, yes, you really must; it is so much more friendly!" She laughed as she spoke, and turned to the girl sitting demurely on the low seat near her with a tacit claim on her sympathy and comprehension which was very fascinating. Miss Pomeroy's pretty, expressionless lips smiled sweetly, and her mother, who was always ready to yield to pressure where a cup of tea was concerned—that soothing beverage being forbidden her by her medical authorities—answered contentedly:

"Well, thanks, yes! I think I will! One really wants a cup of tea on a day like this, doesn't one?" Mrs. Pomeroy had rarely been known to leave a statement unqualified by a question. "It is really very disagreeable weather, isn't it?"

Not that it seems to trouble you at all.' Mrs. Pomeroy smiled one of her slow, amiable smiles as she spoke. "I am so glad to see you looking so much better!"

Mrs. Romaine laughed.

"I am very well indeed, thanks," she said. "But I've not been ill that I know of, dear Mrs. Pomeroy."

Mrs. Pomeroy shook her head gently.

"I thought, do you know, when I first came home, that you looked as though your holiday had been a little too much for you—so many people's holiday is a little too much for them, don't you think? And how is your boy? Very hard at work, we hear."

Mrs. Romaine smiled.

Mrs. Pomeroy was quite right in her comment on her looks, though such a case was rather unusual with her; and it was only within the last fortnight that they had altered for the better. Within that fortnight the brightness and vivacity which were always characteristic of her had ceased to be—as they had been for weeks before—wholly artificial; something of the look of nervous strain had gone out of her eyes, and her face was altogether less sharpened. Her smile now was genuine; and her voice, behind the mask of affectation which had become second nature to her in speaking of Julian, was strangely tender and contented.

"Very hard," she said. "I have had to get used to a great deal of absence on his part. He has gone down to Brighton to-day, until Monday; he needs a little fresh air, of course. It is so long since he has been shut up as he is now."

"You must miss him very much," said Mrs. Pomeroy placidly.

Mrs. Romaine did not answer directly, except with a laugh.

"I am almost inclined to envy mothers with daughters," she said, smiling at Miss Pomeroy again. "I wonder, now"—a sudden idea had apparently struck Mrs. Romaine—"I wonder whether you would lend me your daughter now and then, and I wonder whether she would consent to be lent."

"I should be delighted," said Mrs. Pomeroy, with vague amiability, and an equally vague glance at her daughter. "And I'm sure Maud will be delighted, too; won't you, Maud?"

"Delighted!" assented Maud, with pretty promptitude.

"Well, then, we must arrange it some-

time or other," declared Mrs. Romaine gaily. "Perhaps you would come and spend a week with me, Maud—that would be charming!"

But she did not press the point, letting the subject drop with apparent carelessness, and talking brightly about other things, always keeping the girl in the conversation; turning to her now and then with a pleasant, familiar word, or a gesture which was lightly affectionate. The mother and daughter had risen to take leave when she said carelessly:

"Oh, by-the-bye, Maud, dear, have you anything to do to-morrow afternoon? I've been bothered into taking two tickets for a matinée, a charity affair, you know, but they say it will be rather good. It would be so nice of you to come with me!"

"It will be very nice of you to take me!" was the response. "Thank you very much!"

A minute or two more passed in the arrangement of the place and hour for meeting, and then Mrs. Pomeroy drifted blandly out of the room, followed by her daughter, and Mrs. Romaine was again alone.

She walked to the fireplace this time, and putting one foot on the fender, stood looking down, her face intent and satisfied.

"Just the right sort of girl!" she said to herself. "Just the right sort of girl!"

She was wearing the little gold bangle which Julian had given her on her birthday—the one which Miss Pomeroy had helped him to choose—and she was turning it on her wrist with tender, contemplative touches. She was so absorbed in her reflection that she did not hear the servant come into the room, or notice for the moment that the girl was standing beside her with a letter. She started at last, and looked up; took the letter, and opened it carelessly, without looking at it, as the woman took away the tea-table.

"DEAR COUSIN HERMIA,—Unless I hear from you to the contrary, I propose to call on you to-morrow (Saturday), at three o'clock, on a matter of grave importance.—Faithfully yours, DENNIS FALCONER."

Mrs. Romaine's face had changed slightly as she began to read—changed and hardened—and as she finished she drew the letter through her fingers with a gesture of mere impatience, which was somehow belied by the look in her eyes.

Something of that strained look had come back into them. She could not see him to-morrow, she was saying to herself briefly; she was not going to put off Maud Pomeroy; Dennis Falconer must fix another time, and she would write him a line at once. She walked quickly across to her writing table, sat down, drew out a sheet of paper and took up a pen.

And then she paused.

Ten minutes later her note was written, and on its way to the post, but it was not directed to Dennis Falconer. It began, "My dear Maud," and it told Miss Pomeroy that business had "turned up" which would make it impossible for Mrs. Romaine to go to the theatre on the following afternoon, and that she enclosed the tickets hoping that Maud might be able to use them.

Exactly on the stroke of three on the following afternoon the door-bell rang. Mrs. Romaine was alone in the drawing-room, apparently lazily and pleasantly enough occupied with the latest number of the latest society paper; and as the sound reached her ear her lips hardened into a thin, straight line, and her eyes flashed for a moment with a look of antagonism which was almost defiant. Then the servant announced:

"Mr. Falconer!"

Dennis Falconer was looking very pale; there was little colour even in his lips, and his face was set and stern. He took the hand Mrs. Romaine held out to him, and replied to her greeting in the briefest possible phrase, with no softening of a something curiously solemn and inexorable about his demeanour, though his eyes rested on her for an instant with a singular expression. He disliked and despised the woman before him, and yet at that moment he pitied her.

"Sit down!" she said. "I am charmed to see you, though, do you know, you have chosen an inopportune moment. I had a very pleasant engagement for this afternoon, and I nearly put you off. So I hope the business is really very grave."

Her voice was lightness itself, and that very lightness, with the almost unusual loquacity with which she had received him, seemed to witness to the presence in her mind of a recollection which she was determined to ignore—the recollection of their last interview in that very room. There was a curious air about her of having entrenched herself behind a barrier of artificiality which she tacitly defied him

to pass; of being resolute this time against surprise or against any other method of attack.

"It is very grave!" said Falconer, and in contrast with her voice, his rang with stern heaviness. "I must ask you to prepare yourself for bad news!"

"Bad news!" she echoed sharply, as her eyes, fixed on his face, grew suddenly bright and keen. "Oh—money, I suppose?" Her voice jarred a little, though she spoke very lightly.

"No!" said Falconer.

His tone was absolutely uncompromising. On his unsympathetic and unimaginative mind the effect of her manner was to obliterate his sense of pity beneath a consciousness of the retributive justice of the moment before her.

"Not money?" she said, with a little, unreal laugh. "Well, that's a comfort, at any rate." Her hand had clenched itself suddenly round the arm of her chair on his monosyllable, and now she paused a moment, almost as though her breath had failed her, before she said, with affected carelessness: "And if not—what?"

Her back was towards the light, and Falconer could not see her face.

"I will answer your question, if you will allow me, with another," he said. "Have you noticed anything unusual in the course of the past month—or more—in the conduct of your son?"

In the instant's dead silence that followed a slight creaking sound made itself audible and then died away. The clenched hand on the bar of Mrs. Romaine's chair had passed slowly round it with such intense pressure as to produce the sound. Then she answered him, as he had previously answered her, in a monosyllable.

"No!" she said. There was a desperate effort in her voice at carelessness, at nonchalance, at astonishment; but it was penetrated through and through with all her past antagonism towards and defiance of the man before her accentuated into fierce repudiation. Falconer's voice, as he answered her, seemed to confront that defiance with inexorable fate.

"That is almost unfortunate," he said sternly. "In that case, I fear that what I have to tell you must fall with double and treble severity, as coming upon you unawares. Will you not think again? Has he not been absent from home a good deal? Have his absences been satisfactorily accounted for? Have you ever proved"—he paused, laying stress upon

the crane is helping to pile up, opinions on the river-bank are much divided. Some say the site is for a huge factory in the line of soap and candles; others hint at a river terrace with "mansions" eighteenth storeys high, which will at all events afford a capital view of the boat-races of the next century. A veteran bargee, who has lost sight of his ship in the crowd, remembers the place as "Barker's rails," and there might have been discerned a white railing there, and a solitary figure, perhaps Barker himself, sitting thereupon, and keeping a vigilant look-out for trespassers, in the long ago of 1845 when the University race was first rowed over the course.

It is still a solitary spot, this peninsula of Chiswick, for every day but one in all the year round. Still wild birds haunt its creeks, and plashy oyster-beds and reedy margins, for it will be remembered that from the ferry near Chiswick Church to Kew Bridge, a distance of three miles, there are no regular means of crossing, and for the greater part of the distance no public roads or footpaths leading to the river. This seclusion was long preserved by the existence of extensive private grounds, which spread across the peninsula. There was Sutton Court, once tenanted by Cromwell's daughter, Lady Faulconberg; and Grove Park, of which a benevolent if eccentric proprietor once bequeathed a life interest to his horses, dogs, and old servants; and with these the better known Chiswick House, built by Pope's Lord Burlington, and long possessed by the Dukes of Devonshire, but now occupied as an asylum. The two former estates are being rapidly covered by buildings; but Chiswick House, overlooking its pleasant meadows by the river, is still intact. One cannot help thinking what a fine riverside public park the block of land would make, with a frontage from Corney Lane to the Barnes Railway Bridge, and accessible by river steamers at all times of the tide.

But while we are speculating as to the past and future of the opposite coast, there begins a sympathetic movement in the crowd, which has by some intuitive means divined the fact that "they're off," and eyes are now strained to the full to catch the first glimpse of the racing crews. But the last few minutes have somewhat impaired the prospect from the bank. The tide has risen some inches, and with the tide the crowded barges moored along the banks, and with the barges the people on

board of them, who seem to lengthen out beyond all due proportion. "Don't they stretch their necks, them gals!" says a disappointed spectator of less than the average stature, and the river course glitters through a doubtful haze of hair, mostly feminine, and a vague if pleasing flutter of ribbons, wraps, and dishevelled locks. Stentorian cries of "Sit down in front" are scarcely meant seriously, and are certainly disregarded; in fact, people seem to grow taller and taller, and necks are further and further stretched as the gathering roar announces the approach of the crews. That roar is the most exciting part of the proceedings. It rolls with gruff reverberations from shore to shore, a shore of which the sands are human beings, all vocal for the moment, and so runs up from bank to bank, led by the hooting of the steamers, till it culminates in one great crash of voices, amidst which a boat with dark-blue oars shoots forward well to the front, and as a pistol-shot is heard, the clamour suddenly abates, and dies away in hollow murmurings.

Now that the attractive force which drew together this vast crowd, of which we are only on the outskirts, is loosened, the process of dispersion begins. What a flight of boats, of steamers, of launches, electric and otherwise, of canoes, of raddans, gigs, wherries, and of every description of craft; is whirling upwards with the tide! Bluff tugs with trails of barges laden with sight-seers push their way through the throng. Where the river is narrowed by an islet opposite Strand-on-the-Green, the wash from the bigger craft raises a commotion which is really dangerous for small boats. But here is Robinson Crusoe in his little dingey almost as broad as it is long, which is whirled about like a cork in the flood, but he moves on all the same, no matter which end of the boat is foremost. Then there are saloon steamers such as summer brings with music, dance, and song, to Richmond or Hampton Court, but to-day chartered by dwellers in Richmond, Kingston, or even from distant Reading. All the up-river people seem to have descended bodily to see the boat-race, and now are in full retreat, and there is no end to the flotilla that dances joyously on the waves itself has raised.

But on the shore public attention is directed to quite other things. This is the opening day of the cunning man. The first warm day brings him forth with all his

tribe. It was the same two hundred years ago, when a poet describes their exodus

All these on hoof now trudge from town
To cheat poor turnip-eating clown,

although there was then no such glorious harvest as is offered to the crew by a fine boat-race day.

As to the race itself, it is almost forgotten by now. No one seems to care. But it is instructive to note that there is no trace left of that sturdiness of opinion which stands to its colours whether they win or lose. One little maid, indeed, is heard to say: "Oh, I'm so very sorry for Cambridge," but all who have worn the light-blue favours have now cast them aside, and those who have committed themselves to such colours in essential articles of apparel seem to be rather ashamed of themselves, and are the subject of jeering remark from the bystanders.

But it is not light or dark blue that is now in question among that closely packed circle of excited bystanders, but the more ominous colours of rouge or noir. Or rather it is that grotesque substitute for a roulette-table, which consists of a funny old gentleman with a spiral staircase for spinal marrow, and a marble to roll down it, and hop about among a number of cavities in the board beneath.

"Here y'are, gents, back your number or your colour; make your game while the ball's a-rolling." The old familiar cry is still to the fore, and if the machinery is no longer so elaborate as of old, when peripatetic gambling-tables were often of a costly character, that is because the police are pretty sure to capture and confiscate anything of a bulky character. But the passion for gambling only seems to increase under the difficulties thrown in its way. Next to the roulette-table a game with dice is going on. On a strip of American cloth stretched on a deal box is painted in clumsy white letters, "Under—over—seven." This, with a dice-box and two dice, constitutes the whole machinery. If a "copper" is signalled as approaching, it is the work of a moment to pocket the cloth and dice-box, and the packing-case may be abandoned without great loss. Of course the game is considerably against the punter, as only double stakes are paid for the seven, the odds against which throw are six to one; and for throws under and over seven, single stakes, the odds in each case being four to three against the thrower. Still, the pull in favour of the

bank seems hardly strong enough to find two or three brawny ruffians in board and lodging, and it is difficult to see where the cheating comes in. A much simpler and more profitable way of "roping in" is afforded by the revolving hand, which has such a convenient way of stopping where the stakes happen to be smallest. But this way of all others of losing money is the easiest to be understood of the people, and the most popular among them. There is a constant crush to get near the revolving index, and a stream of coppers falls in a perpetual cascade upon the table.

It is a roadside Monte Carlo, this broad tow-path between Mortlake and Kew, and one can only wonder at the instinctive sagacity that has brought these cunning rascals to the only spot where they could make a harvest. Elsewhere the crowd is too thick and not of the right sort, but here there is a suburban, if not country element about the throng passing along which is soon enthralled into this furtive gambling: there is the railway porter fingering the coins in the pocket of his velveteens, and much disposed to venture at the wheel of fortune; a red jacket or two is among the crowd, and a strong contingent of larrikins and boys, and the copper coins rattle down in a still-increasing shower. The three-card trick performers also are in force, and losing money freely in sums of five and ten shillings in a manner most enticing.

As a natural consequence of the engrossing pursuit, all other caterers for the general amusement are neglected. The cocoa-shy speculator, who is often an honest, hard-working fellow in his line, finds his appeals for patronage utterly ignored; the banjo-man has blackened his face in vain, there is no audience for him, and his hat is returned to him empty. Music and all the ingenuous arts are neglected, while crowds surround the gambling stands. Even the little sweetheart is neglected while Lubin empties his pockets into the wheel of fortune.

But we are soon past the haunt of the artful ones, and Kew Bridge comes in sight with its high, comely arches, and the wooded eyot beyond, over which now hangs the sun like a red-hot ball in the hazy sky. In a nook on the Middlesex side of the bridge a clever little conjurer has got together a capital audience. There should be a future for open-air conjuring, judging by the success of this professor,

who pleases his audience with his patter, and does neat little tricks with very small apparatus. Yet he gets live pigeons and guinea-pigs out of a borrowed hat, and extracts a brimming tumbler from the head of a small, bright-looking urchin, "a puffet stranger," who brings down the house by his looks of horror and surprise. But the conjurer's ingenuity was even better displayed in the adroitness with which he introduced opportunities for making a collection. Now it was that he had made a solemn promise to his preceptor in the black art never to perform a certain trick without fourteenpence halfpenny in hand. Not a penny above that sum would he take; but the solemn pledge he had given compelled him to suspend the performance till that exact sum was subscribed. A working-class audience, always liberal with coppers, freely responds, and the performance goes on. It has been going on all day, and the professor is getting hoarse and husky. He has got as much as he wants for himself, but he must have another collection for that nice little boy who had the pluck and spirit to come forward to have his head cut open. Again the British workman, always touched with disinterested benevolence, liberally responds.

Away go the streams of people, carts and carriages, four-horse vans and four-horse coaches; trains are crammed, trams are carried by storm, everybody seems hurrying away, and yet how many remain!

Hammersmith on boat-race night is like a fair, its taverns, its music-halls crowded till closing time, and the very latest train that goes will be packed as tight as it will hold. And all those Noah's arks full of people, who have steamed up the river, are making out their holiday, doubtless, with some kind of amusement "all along the river, oh!"

But when the lights of Hammersmith, with its glowing shops and flaring stalls, and the cries of the vendors, and the shouts of the crowd, are left behind, the way is quiet enough towards Chiswick, where there is no merrymaking going on. And here, in the dim lamplight, we see the necromancer gliding along towards town, covered with the March dust but content, the pigeons perched on his little pack, the guinea-pigs peeping out of a pocket, and trotting along by his side the clever little boy, the subject of the conjurer's experiments, who bids fair to be as clever a performer as his father.

EPITHETS.

I HAVE no intention of discussing here those epithets, not always complimentary, which honourable members, in a certain distinguished chamber, are accustomed to apply to other honourable members; nor do I propose to enter upon the general subject of Epithets, and the part they have played in the history of the world. Though such an enquiry would undoubtedly prove interesting, not a few wars, negotiations, revolutions, political imbroglios, and the like, being traceable to "a nice derangement of epitaphs;" and in our own country, even at the present day, the complexion of a man's political views depending very much upon the epithet he picks up and labels them with—Whiggish, Radical, Liberal Unionist, Tory Democrat, as the case may be. My purpose, however, is simply to touch upon that judicious use of Epithets in Poetry which is so essential to its grace and impressiveness. To put the right word in the right place is, to be sure, the distinction of a great master of style, whether in poetry or prose; but in poetry there is more room and more need for finish of detail than in prose, and the choice of a happy epithet tells with greater effect, just as the finest carving shows to more advantage on a cameo of ivory than on a column or architrave of marble. One turns to a prose writer, primarily, for what he has to say; to a poet, in no small measure, for the way in which he says it. In a lyric or a sonnet one's attention, I think, is given, in the first place, to the perfection of the form, the fulness of the music; and, in the second, to its inner meaning, its esoteric significance, the burden of the message which it is intended to convey. I venture to affirm that most people read "Paradise Lost" for the grandeur of its language and the wealth of its imagery—caring very little, or not at all, for the theological themes which it embraces. In Shelley's "Skylark" one can hardly contend that the thought is very original or very important; it is the sweet, subtle melody of the rapturous song that makes it immortal. The selection of apt and expressive epithets which will give colour to his verse is incumbent, therefore, upon the poet who would not only be a poet but an artist.

The world's early singers did not go very far, it is true, in this direction. They painted with a bold brush on a large

canvas; and men, who then had ample leisure, were well content that they should tell their story in vivid outlines, and with liberal contrasts of light and shade. Thus you will find that Homer seldom introduces an epithet as a mere grace or embellishment. He has, it is true, an ample stock of adjectives and compound words—"cloud-compelling Zeus," "rosy-fingered Dawn," and so on; but these are limited to purposes of utility. Like the "leit-motif" of the Wagnerian opera, they serve to particularise certain characters, and are repeated whenever those characters are brought forward, just as a flourish of trumpets on the stage always precedes the entry of king or hero. In Virgil, on the other hand, the epithet seems to occupy a place of vantage. It is the sign and seal of the poet's exquisite feeling; and to my mind few poets have excelled him in the skill and good fortune with which he always plays, as it were, the right word. A similar aptitude of expression delights us in Horace, whose odes sparkle freely with gem-like examples of felicitous epithets felicitously applied; like those minute touches, those half-tones, with which a great painter completes the harmony and effectiveness of his picture. In Chaucer, with whom our English poetry begins, you detect quite a Homeric simplicity of epithet: the meads are "green," the sun is "bright," the may is "sweet;" no attempt is made to define the object named; the poet jots down a vaguely general term and passes on. This manner of his was justified by the fact that the reader did not then demand, nor would he have understood, the exactness of language and delicacy of analysis which we now look for, and will not dispense with. The fairy land of Poetry was then all new and fresh; and the pilgrim, enchanted by the fair, sweet aspects of the region into which he had been admitted, cared not to tarry for the purpose of differentiating each separate feature. So Chaucer, in his manly, genial way, blithely sings how

The sonne shon
Upon my bed with bryghte beynys,
With many gladdes, golde stremys,

and again, "Blue, bryghte, clere was the air." What can be simpler—or less perceptive; plainer—or less reflective? Glad, golden, bright, clear! Adjectives which belong to the versifier's stock-in-trade—and yet how appropriate and agreeable in Chaucer's straightforward narratives.

But the generations pass, and the Muse is seen to array herself with gold, and silver, and precious stones. The poet is no longer satisfied merely to tell his tale or enforce his moral; he studies the happiness of expression, the force and fitness of words; he is painstaking in the appropriation of his epithets, so that each shall convey its exact shade of meaning, and answer its artistic purpose. Our English minstrels, I think, owed something, after all, to the influence of the Euphuists, who, whatever may have been their faults of exaggeration and extravagance, had at least a pious care for verbal jewellery and delicacies of style. When Spenser sings of the trees, therefore, he does something more than describe them as "green" or "leafy," epithets which apply to any and every tree, but impresses upon each its distinct character, as "the warlike beech," "the myrrh sweet-blending," and "the fruitful olive." Spenser, I need hardly say, abounds in music and in colour; the right tone, the true note, are always forthcoming. "The flaming mouths of steeds," for instance—what a fine and forcible phrase! But such phrases are common enough in the poet's "The Faery Queen."

Epithet-making is not the business of the dramatic poet; but Shakespeare excelled in this, as in everything. It is by Milton, however, that the art is first practised with deliberate intention, and in Milton I think we may say that it reaches perfection. His wide learning, his rich fancy, and his refined taste helped him to a thorough mastery of his craft; so that the just employment and happy collocation of words have been practised by no English writer with greater success. Hence it is that so many of his phrases have been taken up into our common currency; as "storied windows," "a dim religious light," "the studious cloisters pale," "day's garish eye," "gorgeous Tragedy in sceptred pall," "most musical, most melancholy," all of which occur in the one short poem of "Il Penseroso." From its companion, the "Allegro," you can easily cull as many: "linked sweetness," "antique pageantry," "busy hum of men," "chequered shade," "towered cities," "light fantastic toe," "wreathed smiles." Upon no one of these would it be possible to improve. The same felicitousness is observable in his great epic. Then there in that noble line in "Lycidas," "The great vision of the guarded mount," while in

"Paradise Lost" every page presents some striking example, as : "the frozen lions of the populous North," "autumnal leaves," "that opprobrious hill," "their airy purposes," "sonorous metal blowing martial sounds," "orient colours waving," "thronging helms and serried shields," "disastrous twilight," and "vision beatific."

The strong rhetorical verse of Dryden almost ignores the luxuries of ornament, whereas Pope employs them liberally to conceal the quality of the metal with which he works. His epithets are generally artificial, often conventional, except, indeed, when he wants to point a satiric line. Take his celebrated paraphrase of the description of moonlight in the "Iliad." We read about "clear azure," "sacred light," "vivid planets," and "dusky horrors"; but the insincerity of these terms disgusts us. They are evidently manufactured, and have no true relation to the scene they are supposed to help in representing. The same conventionalism characterises the poet's phraseology in the "Essay on Man": "nectareous juice" and "balmy dew," "whispering zephyr" and "purling rill"; these belong to the "Gradus ad Parnassum" of Della Cruscan rhymesters. I remember, however, one singularly successful epithet which occurs in this poem: "Die of a rose in aromatic pain." Collins, one of the truest of our minor poets, often exhibits a pleasing dexterity of touch in the colouring which, by happily chosen words, he communicates to his verse; as in his beautiful "Ode on the Highland Superstitions," where the right word is always forthcoming without any noticeable effort, and by the simplest yet most effective means the poet produces the impression he desires. Take as a proof one lovely stanza :

There each trim lass that skims the milky store
To the swart tribes their creamy bowl allots ;
By night they sip it round the cottage door,
While airy minstrels warble jocund notes.

"The poetic language of our eighteenth century in general," says Matthew Arnold, "is the language of men composing without their eye on the object, as Wordsworth excellently says of Dryden; language merely recalling the object, as the common language of prose does, and then dressing it out with a certain smartness and brilliancy for the fancy and understanding. This is called 'splendid diction.' It is upon this so-called splendour of diction that Gray's

claim to a place among our poets mainly rests, and no doubt his extensive culture and scholarly taste often assist him to a really striking image, and much polish of versification. But, alas! as in Pope's case, we feel its insincerity, its want of truth; and even in his picturesque poem of the "Elegy" the smell of the midnight oil prevails over the fresh breath of the churchyard mould. "The breezy call of incense-breathing morn" is pretty, but what does it mean?

How jocund did they drive the team afield!

How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

It is evident that these smooth-sounding lines were never written from actual observation. In the "Hymn to Adversity" the unreal is again imposed upon us—"iron scourge," "adamantine chain," "torturing hour"—anybody can look these up in a dictionary! Turn to Cowper or Burns, and we at once detect the immense difference between the false and forced note, and the note spontaneous and true.

I am not attempting a general survey of English poetry, and I pass on, therefore, to Wordsworth. "Splendid diction" he commands with the wealth of a Cæsar whenever his subject needs it—where in all our poetical literature shall we find anything more gloriously splendid than the ode on the "Intimations of Immortality"?—but then it is wholly spontaneous and natural. It rises out of the subject, and is in entire accord with it—seeks the poet rather than is sought by him. In like manner his epithets frequently charm us by their "curiosa felicitas"; though this is never his aim, but simply to present to his own mind the clearest conception possible of the object before him. In his noble poem on "Yew Trees," how finely descriptive and admirably appropriate is each epithet:

A growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine,
Upcoiling, and inveterately convolved.

And in the sonnet on the Beach at Calais, beginning:

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free.

It would, of course, be easy to pick out gems of expression from Coleridge; and as for Shelley, his verse is loaded with gorgeous embroidery, like the robe of a Persian king. You know his glowing forest-landscape in "Alastor"; "The meeting boughs and implicated leaves," "the night's noontide dreamers," "a soul-dissolving odour," "like vaporuous shapes

half-seen." And the "Ode to a Skylark," the "Prometheus," the "Adonais"—it is a delightful study to examine the exquisite appropriateness and happy originality of the terms employed by the poet in description and characterisation. I take the first illustrations that occur to me :

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an embodied joy whose race is just begun.
Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh, thy music doth surpass.
And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions ;
With stars of fire spotting the streams below,
And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-winged
minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow,
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime
With which frost paints the pines in winter
time.

As underneath a cloud of dew,
Embodied in the windless heaven of June,
Amid the splendour-winged stars, the moon
Beams inextinguishably beautiful.

As for Keats, he almost oppresses us with his Tarpesian burthen of costly ornament : "Trees young and old, sprouting a shady boon ;" "The earnest trumpet spake ;" "The shady sadness of a vale ;" "The healthy breath of morn ;" "A diver in the pearly seas ;" "The popped warmth of sleep ;" "Smooth-sculptured stone ;" "A throbbing star seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose ;" "Singest of summer in full-throated ease ;" "Verdurous glooms and mossy winding ways ;" "Looked at each other with a wild surmise." It is with such exquisitely chosen and richly coloured phrase—rounded and lucent as a pearl—that Keats holds captive our admiration.

Among the later poets—passing over with regret Browning, Swinburne, Morris, and other singers of our own time for want of space—I should point to Matthew Arnold and Tennyson as excelling in the art of making and applying epithets. In Arnold's poems, which with their modern tone combine the old classic form, we constantly come upon the happiest instances, their fitness as well as their beauty fixing them permanently in our memory. As thus : "Pale, dew-drenched, half-shut roses gleam ;" "The brook shines . . . in its clear, shallow, half-fringed bed ;" "All the woody, high, well-watered dells," "Lonely, cold-shining lights, unwilling lingerers in the heavenly wilderness ;" "The moon-

silvered inlets ;" "The sweet-breathing presence ;" "The sun-reddened western straits," and "Labour-dimmed eyes." In pure grace and fine polish of expression Arnold is scarcely outvied by Tennyson himself, though he, of all our poets, the most excels in those verbal felicities which linger in the ear like echoes of sweet music ; and more particularly in epithets curiously exact and fortunate in their application to natural objects. The reader will not fail to remember "The many-knotted water-flags ;" "The ragged rims of thunder, with shadow-streaks of rain ;" "The creeping mosses and clambering weeds ;" "A sand-built ridge of heaped hills ;" "Turrets lichen-gilded like a rock ;" "Full-foliated elms ;" "Dewy-tasselled woods," and a hundred others, not less honest, apt, and veracious. Always in his verse Tennyson, with the unerring instinct of the artist, adopts the word which of all others is best fitted for its purpose. There is no straining after effect, no resort to ostentatious and pedantic phraseology in order to astonish and surprise the reader ; every word fits into its place in the rich and beautiful mosaic. I venture on one quotation :

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
Till over down and over dale
All night the shining vapour sail
And pass the silent, lighted town,
The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
And catch at every mountain head,
And o'er the friths that branch and spread
Their sleeping silver thro' the hills ;
And touch with shade the bridal doors,
With tender gloom the roof, the wall ;
And breaking let the splendour fall
To spangle all the happy shores.

There is more in this matter of epithets than at first sight one would suppose. We have attempted to show that they indicate and help to define the contrast between the older literature, with its generalisations, its commonplaces and ostentatious neglect of details, and the later literature, with its subtlety of analysis and its exactness of discrimination. We might also take up the position of the grammarian, and insist on the variety afforded by a judicious use of figures : by synecdoche, by metonymy, by prolepsis, by autonomasia, as in Gray's "Village Hampden" ; by personification, as in Coleridge's address to Mont Blanc, "Thou kingly spirit" ; or by metaphor, as in Tennyson's lines :

A crowd of hopes,
That sought to sow themselves like winged seeds.
The primary requirement in the epithet

is that it shall be appropriate. Thus we recognise the justness of Charles Kingsley's description of "the cruel, crawling foam, the cruel, hungry foam," when the tide, stealthily creeping over the sands of Dee, has found a victim in a "gold-haired maiden." But this suggestion of the devouring cruelty of the sea would be out of place when Shelley basks in its sunshine, and beholds "the smile of Heaven on the bosom of the deep;" and very different is the idea which Tennyson seeks to put before us when he paints an iron coast and angry waves, which "roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves." Our last example of apt and happy epithet I borrow from Mrs. Barrett Browning's noble poem of "Aurora Leigh." It is perfect in its simplicity, "simplex munditiis":

The tangled hedgerows, where the cows push out
Impatient horns and tolerant churning mouths
'Twixt dripping ash-boughs.

BINKS'S COURTSHIP.

A COMPLETE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

BINKS was forty.

At least he said he was, and as he had always been forty ever since I first had the pleasure of making his acquaintance some ten years back, I had no reason to disbelieve his statement.

It was on Binks's birthday that he gave me this piece of information for the tenth time, and he gave it with a sigh.

"Joseph," he said, "who would think that this is my fortieth birthday? Dear, dear, how the years do fly!"

It was my own private opinion that Binks had a knack of making them stand still, but I held my tongue. I never irritate a man when I see that he is about to confide in me, and something was evidently weighing on Binks's mind.

He was smoking a pipe with a depressed air as we sat over the fire together, and I wondered if his cook had given notice. Binks was particular over his food.

"Joseph," he continued, after a pause, "when a man has reached the age of forty, it begins to dawn upon him that he has duties to do in the world—duties, my boy."

It struck me that if a man did not realise this fact until he had reached the age mentioned by Binks, it was extremely probable that he would pass out of life without ever thinking of them at all.

"For instance," went on Binks, fixing his eye upon me, "there's marriage, now. A man ought to marry, Joseph."

I was thirty-five myself—not by Binks's way of calculating—and unmarried. I anticipated, therefore, a lecture from Binks on the subject.

"My dear fellow," I said, "I'm too ugly. Nobody would look at me."

I thought that my humble answer to Binks was a playful way of putting a stop to a conversation which might be distasteful, and which was certain to bore me. I was therefore surprised at the ferocity of Binks's small eyes as he turned them on me.

"You?" he said, in slow and measured tones of scorn. "You are only a boy. I was speaking of myself."

To say that my eyes nearly fell out of my head at this remark, would be a poor and feeble way of expressing my astonishment. Ever since Binks's first fortieth birthday—ten years ago—he had been such a confirmed bachelor and woman-hater, that the idea of matrimony had never even entered into my head in connection with him. He had lived in the same solid, square, old-fashioned house, partaken of the same solid, square, old-fashioned meals, and been served by the same solid, square, old-fashioned servants, as long as I could remember. He liked everything to be done by clockwork, and had certain strange fixed whims and ways of his own which a future Mrs. Binks would infallibly do her best to upset. In person, too, Binks could scarcely be called attractive. He presented the general appearance of an unfledged sparrow. He had a beaky nose, small, beady, black eyes, and a high, bald head, with a scanty fringe of suspicious-coloured hair all round it. When he got excited in conversation and flapped his arms about, the resemblance became positively startling, and it was all I could do to prevent myself from admiring the exact personification aloud sometimes.

On the present occasion, of which I duly recognised the importance, I felt that something was expected of me. I resolved to be diplomatic, however, as Binks looked so much in earnest—he is a bigger man than I am, and apt to hit out when irritated—and I therefore repressed those brilliant and pungent witticisms which were hovering at the end of my tongue, and for the readiness and aptitude of which I had achieved quite a reputation in a small way, and merely said, shaking my head a little:

"Well, well, Binks, there is something in what you say, but I am afraid it will be a great change for you."

"That is what I am rather afraid of too, Joseph," responded Binks a little uneasily, "but I am a firm man, as you know, and I should resist any innovations of which I disapproved."

I fancied that this antenuptial resolution on Binks's part might be productive of matrimonial squabbles in the future, especially if the lady happened to be high-spirited.

I imparted these impressions to Binks in a judiciously veiled manner.

"Not at all, not at all," he answered, rising and walking about the room excitedly. "I have no fears on that score. I shall be particularly careful, in making my choice, to fix upon a lady who is both amiable and pliable."

"They are rather difficult to meet with," I replied, by way of damping his ardour a little; "or at least Nature, in her beautiful way of balancing things, usually unites amiability with ugliness. Witness myself."

"Not at all, not at all," replied Binks once more—this was a favourite expression of his. "I assure you that a beautiful face is generally a reflection of the beautiful soul within, and vice versa."

I do not think that Binks meant to be personally insulting here, but he is not always so careful in the choice of expression as he should be. A coarser-minded man than myself would have looked upon the remark as a direct affront.

"My dear Binks," I said, "I can only hope that you will find your paragon. My own experience tells me that such a woman does not exist."

A slow, cunning smile crept over Binks's face as I said this, and the expression made me so uneasy that I exclaimed hastily:

"Good Heavens, Binks, is it possible that you have already made your choice?"

Binks flapped a little nearer, and the fatuous smile spread over his features.

"What if I have?" he said hoarsely.

I made no reply, being for the moment rather stunned, and also occupied in my own mind in running over all Binks's feminine acquaintances. I failed to find one whom I considered in any way suitable.

In the meantime Binks had flapped to the glass, and was regarding himself in it with an expression of innocent admiration of his own charms, which made me long to

fell him to the earth. How often have I wished that Heaven had not made me two feet shorter than Binks!

"You wouldn't call me a bad-looking man, now, eh, Joseph?" he said, with a smirk, as he turned away.

"Well, Binks, there's no accounting for tastes, you know."

This answer, in some inexplicable manner, seemed to have a soothing effect upon him.

"Quite right, Joseph, quite right; it is as you say. I have hopes that my advances will be met favourably. I look young," said Binks, inflating his chest and going round like a windmill, "and I feel young. Now, I am sure that no one would take me to be forty, Joseph. Come, now, would they?"

"No one," I hastened to assure him, with obvious irony. But again he seemed pleased.

"No one, as you say. I have a great opinion of your judgement, Joseph. It is sound on many points, and frequently coincides with mine. Joseph, young as you are, I am about to confide in you."

He stopped for a moment to draw a deep breath.

"It is a terrible step," he said meditatively, "and to tell you the truth, there are times when, charming as I know her to be, I rather shrink from the thought of having to spend my life at her side. But there, a man never knows what scrapes an over-punctilious sense of duty will drag him into. You see, I am the last of my family, Joseph."

He sank his voice to a mournful whisper as he said this, and I understood from it that the only motive he had for plunging into matrimony was in order to raise up a fresh generation of Binkses, wherewith to decorate this forlorn earth.

"Oh, yes, Binks," I replied, in hasty answer to his somewhat hurt glance, "I quite see how it is. Of course you ought to marry."

"Yes, yes, it will have to be done," said Binks, with a weary sigh; "people have gone through it before, I suppose. A man has duties, you know——"

I burst in to interrupt a string of little moral aphorisms which I foresaw were coming, and of which I know Binks to be particularly fond.

"Oh, stow that, Binks," I said, somewhat roughly. "What's her name?"

"You have a very coal-heaverish way of putting things," said Binks, in a tone of

marked displeasure, "and you are always in too great a hurry. That propensity of hurrying is fatal to a man in your profession, Joseph."

I looked round for my hat and stick in such a decided manner that Binks saw that I was not to be trifled with. The fatuous smile stole over his face again.

"You know Mrs. Huckwell?" he said, in a whisper.

I started back in amazement. I am not often moved to express myself in a vulgar manner, but I could not refrain from giving a low whistle of astonishment.

Mrs. Huckwell!

She was a tall, thin, over-dressed widow of more than forty years—Binks's forty years, too!—with a high, unnatural fixed colour in her cheeks, and an evident taste for millinery and jewellery. She "gushed" a good deal, and was the happy possessor of five very handsome unmarried daughters. Fancy Binks, the sober, stolid old bachelor Binks, stepfather to five lively, fashionable young ladies!

I lay back in my chair, and feebly passed my hand across my forehead. Binks flapped a little nearer, and I spoke hastily:

"I'm sure I congratulate you heartily, Binks—so sensible, and all that. Only I am afraid you will find five girls rather a handful to——"

I never finished that sentence. Binks came so near that I pushed my chair quickly back. There was a look in his beady eyes which I did not like. They glowed like coals of fire.

"Why, you confounded fool!" he exclaimed wrathfully, shaking an angry fist in my face. "Mrs. Huckwell, indeed! What should I want to marry an old hag like that for—with her painted cheeks and ridiculous bonnets? You never wait for me to finish a sentence, Joseph. This habit of undue precipitancy is growing on you, and will no doubt some day land you in an unpleasant position. No, Joseph, I am not quite old enough to think of Mrs. Huckwell, thank you. I have fixed upon Gertrude, and feel sure that she will do honour to my choice."

I gave a shrill, unnatural laugh as Binks thus brought out the name of the woman whom he had candidly confessed he rather shrank from as a lifelong companion. I know one man at least, small in stature though great in soul, who would have given all that he possessed for the chance of spending his life with Gertrude

Huckwell, and I have no doubt that there were many others who shared his feelings. Now, although all the Misses Huckwell were eminently handsome girls, Gertrude was the flower of the flock. She was also "the last of that bright band" in point of age, having just completed her nineteenth birthday.

I thought of her light, lithe figure, her charming face, her beautiful eyes, and her bright bronze hair—and then I looked at Binks, tall, and thin, and stooping, with crow's-feet round his eyes, and that fringe of odd-coloured hair adorning his polished head, and I groaned aloud.

"What are you making that noise for, Joseph?" said Binks sharply. "Are you afraid that the lady of my choice should prove less amiable than I think? I assure you, Joseph, that she has shown herself quite angelic under the most trying circumstances."

If the trying circumstances stood for Binks himself, I could understand that Gertrude Huckwell must be more angel than woman to endure them.

"Are you—have you proposed?" I demanded, in the hasty manner which Binks had so often openly deprecated. I asked this question with a sinking heart, for however angelic a woman may be, riches make a distinct impression on her sometimes if she has been brought up amid concealed poverty. Now Binks was a rich man, and Gertrude was poor.

"I cannot say I have exactly proposed," said Binks, inflating his chest once more, "but I have paid her marked attentions—very marked attentions. I think there can have been no mistake about the object of my visits, and she has received them with every appearance of pleasure. I ventured to make her a small present of a bracelet yesterday," added Binks, with a simper, "quite an inexpensive little thing"—what a mean beggar the fellow is!—diamonds would not be good enough for Gertrude—and she let me clasp it on her pretty arm and seemed quite delighted."

Binks is such a disgusting mass of vanity, and pomposity, and egregious egotism that he makes me feel quite sick sometimes.

"Oh, then it is practically settled," I said, with an airy attempt at jocularly, "and you will be calling upon me to draw up the marriage settlement."

"'M—yes," said Binks thoughtfully, rasping his chin with one lean hand. "'M—yes, I dare say there will be settlements. I shall propose to Gertrude in due

form to-morrow," he added, drawing himself up with an air of dignity, "and I am happy to say that I feel quite sure of receiving a favourable reply. She has given me every encouragement in her pretty, modest way."

I could have seized Binks round his wiry neck and flung him out of his own window with the greatest pleasure. Only the fear of a passing policeman restrained me from putting my desire into execution.

"I shall speak to Mrs. Huckwell first, of course," went on Binks, who was too absorbed in his own affairs to notice the expression of my face. "In my young days it was not considered etiquette to propose until one had gained the consent of the young lady's parents. I shall do everything in proper form, you may be sure."

"I don't think you will experience the least difficulty in gaining Mrs. Huckwell's consent to your wooing," I remarked drily.

"No, I apprehend not," said Binks, craning his neck to get another look at himself in the glass. "I apprehend not. Mrs. Huckwell is a sensible woman, and knows that I am a man of some position."

"And means," I added—maliciously, as I thought.

"And means," acquiesced Binks placidly. "I flatter myself that Gertrude Huckwell could do worse than take me for a husband."

I took my hat and stick and went after that. It is quite true that there is no fool like an old fool. How beautifully and unconsciously Binks illustrates that adage!

CHAPTER. II.

I WATCHED Binks walking up the street next day with great interest. I saw that he was bound for the Huckwells' house not only by the manner in which he was dressed, but also by the way he was walking. He pranced delicately along the road on the tips of his patent-leather toes like Agag the king of renowned memory, and poked his head rather far forward, after the fashion of an enquiring camel.

He wore a tight frock-coat, severely buttoned in at the waist in order to give elegance to his figure, lemon-coloured kid gloves, a high shiny hat, and a huge button-hole of moss-rose buds. These latter, which in fact formed quite a nose-gay, he had every intention of dramatically presenting to his lady-love as soon as

he was accepted, having a dim idea that he had read somewhere or other that the flower in question meant "I love thee to despair."

My eyes could only follow Binks as far as the end of the street, where he turned a corner in a tremulous fashion and disappeared, so that for the following part of this narrative I am indebted to Binks himself on his return from his visit. For the sake of my readers I will transcribe what had occurred as though I had been an eye-witness. Indeed, Binks's vivid description almost brought the scene before my mind.

After he turned the corner, where my eyes last beheld him, he walked steadily onwards in the direction of Shaw Lodge, the Huckwells' abode. He noticed with pleasure how nicely the house was kept, and how gay the window-boxes looked, full of the deep blue of the lobelia against a background of flaring scarlet geranium. He wondered if Gertrude's fair fingers were responsible for the charming effect; and with all the inconsistency of a man in love, concluded that they were.

He rang the bell loudly, probably owing to extreme nervousness, and waited for admittance. The sound of Gertrude's voice singing in the drawing-room floated to his ears, and he smiled faintly. It would be sweet to have this voice always ready to warble to him. He had closed his eyes as he dreamed this fair dream, and when he opened them again he found the door ajar, and the servant waiting for him in some astonishment to ask the usual formula. Somewhat flurried, he stepped in, saying:

"Is Mrs. Huckwell at home?"

And the answer being in the affirmative, added, as he took off his hat:

"I should like to see her alone—er, on business."

The servant, who knew him well, after taking stock of the tall hat, moss-rose buds, and yellow kid gloves, decided that she could guess what that business was, and retired with a smile on her rosy face.

Binks walked up and down the room in a perfect frenzy of impatience. In the face of danger—as he observed to me afterwards—he could be beld enough, but when he had to deal with a woman he became nervous and flustered. From which it will be seen that Binks did not show to the best advantage that afternoon, and that he was not in possession of that

evenly balanced mind upon which he prides himself. Mrs. Huckwell, contrary to her usual custom, kept him waiting some time, and the agonised suitor was really in a pitiable condition when she at last made her appearance.

He had heard a good deal of hurried tramping about overhead, and concluded, rationally enough, that Mrs. Huckwell was improving her toilet for the sake of the business interview on which Mr. Binks had come.

This view of affairs was confirmed by her entrance in a magnificently flowing tea-gown, which had evidently been hastily donned, from the fact that she had hooked it wrong from top to bottom, a mistake which Binks's eyes took in in a dull and deadened sort of way. In telling me the story afterwards he could describe every detail of her costume—down to the shell necklace round her throat, and the rings on her fingers. To him she had never seemed so vulgar and over-dressed. The fixed colour in her cheeks, the superabundance of jewellery, the clinking, impossible *châtelaine* that she wore at her waist—all combined to irritate him to an almost unbearable degree. He told me afterwards that the thought of having her for a mother-in-law almost made him give up the idea of taking Gertrude for a wife. It seems curious that this thought should have flashed across him just then, but it did.

"Dear Mr. Binks," said the lady, seating herself beside him on the sofa when the first greetings had been interchanged, and her bejewelled fingers had pressed, for a moment, Binks's tight kid glove, "how delightful of you to come and see us at this hour, before any horrid visitors are likely to interrupt us! So very friendly!"

Binks grasped his stick rather tightly, and gazed down into the depths of his hat. Being on an unconventional footing with the family he usually left these articles in the hall, but this afternoon he felt that he must have support of some kind, and the stick seemed to help him somehow. It was at this juncture that he began to breathe rather hard in little snorts and gasps, as was his wont when excited, and Mrs. Huckwell hoped anxiously that he "had not hurried himself."

"Not at all—not at all," said Binks, recovering himself a little. "Er—what charming window-boxes you have, Mrs. Huckwell!"

Mrs. Huckwell glanced out at the lobelia

and geranium with rather a disappointed air, and replied that they were certainly effective, but that they were a great deal of trouble.

"I shouldn't be surprised, now," said Binks, with a cumbrous attempt at jocularly, "if some of my fair young friends took the trouble off your hands—Miss Gertrude, for instance?"

"My darling Gertrude is devoted to flowers," answered Mrs. Huckwell, "but she does not love them as passionately as her mother. To these poor fingers, Mr. Binks," and she playfully wagged them before his face, "is due the honour of any amateur gardening done in this house."

"Oh!" said Binks, rather blankly.

He had hoped that the question, cunningly devised, might lead smoothly on to the proposal he intended making, but he had travelled up a blind alley, so to speak, and he therefore hastily abandoned the subject. He cleared his throat and took a plunge.

"I dare say you are surprised to see me here this afternoon, Mrs. Huckwell," he said; "it is an unusual hour for me to call."

"Indeed, we are only too pleased to see you at any time, Mr. Binks. I am sure we all look forward to your visits with the greatest of pleasure. We should feel quite lost without you. Gertrude was saying so to me only the other day. 'Mamma,' she said, 'whatever should we do without Mr. Binks?' Dear child, she is quite fond of you, and no wonder, I am sure, when you are so good to her."

Binks beamed and bridled with pride.

"Oh, no, not good at all; a great pleasure, I am sure—greatest admiration for Miss Gertrude," he murmured, rather fragmentarily.

"But it is good of you," insisted the lady; "that bracelet, for instance. Gerty was so delighted. 'That dear Mr. Binks,' she said to me when you had gone, 'is he not kind, mamma? Quite the kindest friend we have.' You see what a favourite you are, Mr. Binks."

Binks was in quite a twitter of pleasure at this. The road stretched so smoothly in front of him that there did not seem to be a single obstacle. The demand for Gertrude's hand was a pure formality, but as such it must be gone through.

Binks clutched the stick more tightly, and began:

"My visits to this house form the

pleasantest part of my life, Mrs. Huckwell."

"Indeed, I'm sure I'm only too glad," murmured Mrs. Huckwell. "It is very kind of you to say so."

"You must have seen for some time," went on Binks, "that I have a motive in coming here—a motive, ma'am."

"Indeed, I have thought so sometimes, but of course it was not for me to speak," said Mrs. Huckwell, showing a suspiciously even row of teeth. "I think several people have noticed it," she added, with a simper.

"I—ah—yes, perhaps so," said Binks, rather pleased at this remark. "I conclude, then, that I may take your consent for granted?"

"Indeed—really—yes, I suppose so. This is a very happy day for me. Timothy," she went on, much to Binks's surprise, coming very near him. "You poor dear fellow, I believe you have been trying to propose for years! Of course, though I gave you every encouragement, I was powerless in the matter. My poor father used to say that men were fools in such affairs, and that a woman had to do half the work if she ever wanted to get a husband at all."

Now there were several things in this speech that jarred upon Binks, who is, as he often tells me, a man of peculiarly refined susceptibilities. In the first place he disliked being called Timothy, and in the second place he thought Mrs. Huckwell's manner bordered on familiarity. He drew a little away from her as he replied:

"Oh, well, as for years, of course that is not the case. I have been deeply attached for some months, I own."

"As if everybody had not seen it!" said Mrs. Huckwell playfully, stealing a bony hand into his. "Why, my poor dear Timothy, don't you suppose I know the signs well enough? Since my William's death, I can assure you I have had hard work to keep a widow."

She sighed deeply, and Binks took advantage of her temporary pensiveness to try and wriggle his hand away from hers, but she held it fast.

"I am sure," she said, with a blush, "that it doesn't seem quite fair on the girls, but when one is in love, one scatters every consideration to the winds, doesn't one, Timothy?"

This speech, and the squeeze she gave his hand, a little puzzled Binks, who was

already hopelessly confused, and he supposed that she alluded to the fact that it was hard on the elder girls to assist at their youngest sister's wedding, in the character of spinsters. He therefore made a guttural sound of assent.

"Not but what they are quite prepared for it, Timothy—quite prepared. Girls are so sharp about these things. I must tell you what Gertrude said when she saw you coming in at the door—I am sure you will not mind, you are so good-natured. She rushed up to me at once. 'Mamma,' she said, 'there is Mr. Binks standing on the door-steps, and he has light kid gloves on, and such a bunch of roses in his button-hole! I am sure he has come to propose.' You mustn't be angry, Timothy," added Mrs. Huckwell, rather anxiously, as she observed a cloud hovering over Binks's polished forehead. "Girls are a little giddy, you know, and will have a laugh at us elderly folks; but no one appreciates the goodness of your heart better than Gertrude."

"I hope your daughter is not inclined to be flippant, ma'am," said Binks, frowning, and unappeased by the appealing pressure of her fingers.

"Oh dear, no! I should not allow such a thing for a moment! And you have no idea how the—the result of this afternoon will please her. Of course it is not unexpected, but still—— She is so quick! When you gave her that bracelet last week—so generous of you, dear Timothy—she came to me afterwards, and put her cheek against mine, and said, 'I think it is my future papa who has given me this, isn't it, mamma?' Wasn't it sharp of the dear child? Fancy you Gertrude's papa!"

Binks told me that he heard these terrible words as in a dream. It must have been quite five minutes before he grasped the full horror of the situation. He "Gertrude's papa!"

He said he had not the least idea how he got out of the house. He remembered rising in a dazed sort of way. He remembered the tea-gowned figure with its clinking châtelaine rustling anxiously after him, and asking if he "felt faint," and his reply, wild with despair, "I must get away, I want air. Don't follow me."

The next thing he remembered was that he reached his own house in such a tottering condition that the butler thought he was drunk, and offered to help him upstairs. He reached his own room somehow, set his heel on the rose-buds, and

deliriously threw the yellow kid gloves out of the window. Then he sat down to collect himself.

Here endeth the story as told to me by Binks.

CHAPTER III.

AN hour later, having watched Binks's reeling progress home, I called to enquire for him, and was not surprised when the butler, while readily admitting such an honoured friend as myself, confided to me that he feared his master was in no fit condition to receive visitors. He lowered his voice as he said that he had lived with Mr. Binks, man and boy, for thirty year, and had never seen him the worse for drink before.

I hardly knew whether to save Binks's reputation from the stigma of drunkenness by revealing that his affections had just been shattered, as a legitimate excuse for his condition, or not. But it occurred to me that I should be violating his confidence by laying bare the romance of his bosom to the vulgar eye of a common menial; and besides, how did I know for certain that Binks had been refused? Might not his tremulousness proceed from excess of joy? I only shook my head, therefore, and proceeded upstairs to Binks's bedroom, whither he had tottered unaided. I expected to find him either flapping about the room in a state of indignant excitement, or else sunk into a state of hopeless collapse. But to my surprise he neither flapped nor wailed. He was energetically engaged in ramming things into portmanteaux with an air of sullen determination.

"Why, Binks," I said, pausing on the threshold of his chamber, "what the deuce are you doing?"

"I am packing. Can't you see that for yourself, you idiot?" responded Binks sulkily.

He went on with his work, and I sat on the edge of the bed and watched him.

"Where are you going?" I asked at last.

"To the uttermost parts of the earth," responded Binks, scripturally if rather vaguely. "I am going abroad for years. Perhaps I may never come home again."

I had not given Binks credit for loving so deeply and passionately. I was sorry for having misjudged him. I reflected that often, under a commonplace exterior one finds a warm and romantic heart. He had been refused—and he suffered.

"Binks," I said persuasively, "tell me all about it."

He sat down on a loaded portmanteau and told me, with full details, the whole harrowing history.

Binks had not always treated me with the deference due to my five-and-thirty years and my superior mental endowments. Nevertheless, when I saw his pitiable condition I felt my heart moved within me.

"Binks," I said abruptly, "you are an awful fool, as I have often told you before. It is your fatal habit of hurrying that has landed you in this unpleasant position. But I am sorry for you. If you choose to leave yourself entirely in my hands, I will see what I can do for you."

I assumed a judicial attitude as I said this, and Binks looked crushed and humble.

"Now you clearly understand, Binks, that when I say that, I mean that I will help you to dissolve your engagement"—Binks groaned here—"to Mrs. Huckwell. But I do not intend to assist you in any further matrimonial adventures. You must give up all idea of marrying Gertrude."

"I don't want to marry any one," said Binks fervently.

I paced up and down the room for a few steps, frowning portentously.

"You will give me 'carte blanche' in the matter, I presume?" I went on. "I don't want any of your clumsy interference in my schemes."

"I am sure I couldn't be in better hands, Joseph," said Binks, with flabby humility.

"It's just as well that you at last recognise that, Binks," I said severely; "some men might have taken the past into account, and left you to get yourself out of the scrape as best you could. However—Binks, did you have any money in the Oriental Bank?"

The suddenness of this question nearly threw Binks off his mental and physical balance.

"Why, yes," he responded; "but what has that got to do with it? It has gone smash, and I have lost sixty pounds."

I smiled grimly as I seated myself at Binks's writing-desk, and wrote a short letter which I sealed and put in my breast-pocket.

It was addressed to the editor of the local paper.

"Well, good-bye, Binks," I said cheerfully, "and thank the stars that you possess a friend who has a head on his

shoulders, and a generous and forgiving disposition."

Binks wanted to hear a great deal more about what I intended to do, but I departed with a sphinx-like air, and left him, though still sitting on the edge of a portmanteau, with a gleam of hope in his beady eyes which had not been there when I first entered the room.

I dropped the letter into the nearest pillar-box, and went home serenely, chuckling a little to myself.

The next morning this paragraph appeared in the "North Barton Courier":

"We regret to learn that our esteemed and respected townsman, Mr. Timothy Binks, of Oldfield House, has been a very heavy loser by the failure of the Oriental Bank. Rumour says that the unfortunate gentleman had deposited nearly the whole of his fortune in it a few days before the crash came. It is to be feared that he is not the only loser here."

I read this account of my friend's ruin with a cheerful and unmoved countenance, and in the afternoon I took my hat and stick and went over to Shaw Lodge in time for a cup of afternoon tea. I saw from the moment I entered the drawing-room that the family seemed in a depressed frame of mind. Casting my eyes furtively round, I saw the "North Barton Courier" lying open on the table.

After the first greetings had been interchanged, and Gertrude had supplied me with tea and muffins with her own fair hands, Mrs. Huckwell took up the paper, and mournfully asked me, as Mr. Binks's oldest friend and adviser, whether there were any truth in the sad statement she had just read.

"For," she remarked, "these newspapers do get hold of things and exaggerate them in a most extraordinary fashion, and I should not like to write and condole with poor dear Mr. Binks if he has only lost a few pounds."

"Mrs. Huckwell," I said solemnly, putting down my cup, and neglecting the muffins, "our poor friend Binks is in a state bordering on distraction. I have just come from him. A sadder sight I never saw. He was already packing to go abroad, but he desisted on my advice from deciding anything hastily, and will, I hope, be induced to stop on in the old familiar place where we all love and respect him. I dare say," I added, with a sigh, "that some of us might club together and provide a small cottage to shelter his old age."

"Dear me, is it as bad as that?" said Mrs. Huckwell uneasily. "I should have thought Mr. Binks would have done better abroad."

"You don't understand Timothy Binks if you say that, ma'am. He is of a peculiarly sensitive disposition. Transplant him and he would die! Besides, to tell you the truth," and I bent a little forward and fixed my eyes on hers, "he seems to have a particular reason for wishing to stay in North Barton. I fancy it is a sentimental one, but I cannot violate the poor fellow's confidence by telling you any more."

"Then you don't know the lady's name?" asked Mrs. Huckwell, with an uneasy laugh.

"I haven't the least idea," I answered unblushingly. "Binks is a very reserved man. But I feel sure that if he loves it will be for ever. I hope the lady to whom he is attached will not throw the worthy fellow overboard. He is a man in a thousand."

"Ah, you are young, and can take a romantic view of things," said Mrs. Huckwell, sighing. "We old folks know that a household is not carried on by kisses. If I knew the lady of whom you speak, Mr. Slater, I should recommend her to break off the match at once."

She sipped her tea with a pensive air and relapsed into silence, now and then casting a look at the paper and murmuring:

"Poor Mr. Binks!"

When I left, Gertrude followed me to the door. There were actually tears in the poor girl's beautiful eyes, and I felt a perfect brute.

"Please give my love to Mr. Binks," she said, in a whisper, "and tell him how very, very sorry I am. He is always so good to me."

I gave Binks part of the message, but the "love" I kept myself. I thought it might have an intoxicating effect upon him, and lead him to seek Gertrude out on the spot, reveal the fraud—of which at present he was blissfully unaware—and offer to make her his wife at once, with or without the formality of Mrs. Huckwell's assent.

I strolled into Oldfield House that night to see how affairs were progressing with Binks. I found him sitting with his elbows on the table and his head in his hands, reading a much-perfumed missive with an air of the most complete amazement. He had run his fingers through the fringe of

hair that adorned his head, until it stood up like the aureole of some martyred saint. Only it revealed the fact that while the top layer of the aureole was almost black, the underneath part was nearly white. But Binks lost sight of personal appearance for the time being.

"Will you tell me what this means?" he cried in excitement the moment he saw me, flapping the note wildly to and fro. "This is some of your doing, I suppose."

I sat down in a leisurely manner, and stretched out my hand for the scented paper.

"My dear Binks," I said, "don't get excited. That fatal habit of hurrying is growing upon you."

Too crushed to retaliate, Binks relapsed into silence while I read the note aloud.

It ran thus :

"SHAW LODGE, July 10th.

"MY DEAR MR. BINKS,—In view of the sad news that I read in to-day's 'Courier,' I am sure you will agree with me that it is best to terminate our short-lived engagement at once. This decision may seem harsh, and I know how deeply you will feel it—my heart aches for you as I write the cruel, cruel words—but I am sure that perfect frankness and openness between us will save many bitter pangs in the future. Some day you will thank me for having been strong enough to take the course that my head, and not my heart, dictates. My late dear husband, in his jealous love for me, enacted that in case of a re-marriage I should lose my present little income. I cannot drag my poor children down to poverty, even for your sake. Do not ask it, dear Timothy, I am firm on the point. If I might give you a piece of advice, it would be that you should leave the place for a while. Much pain would be spared to us both by this.

"I do not presume to offer you my sympathy, but can only remain,

"Your sorrowing friend, "

"ANASTASIA C. M. HUCKWELL."

"Well, Binks," I said tranquilly as I laid the note down, "you ought to be very much obliged to me."

"I am not so sure about that," growled Binks. (He really is the most ungrateful brute alive.) "You have made me look a perfect fool."

I showed him the paragraph in the paper. He was furious at first, as he is unfortunately a scrupulously truthful man, but he calmed down after a while, and

even thanked me in a grudging way before I left.

I do not know what Mrs. Huckwell's feelings must have been when she saw Binks daily driving about in his well-appointed dog-cart as usual. I fancy she must have felt her over-precipitancy very deeply, for she left the place soon after the affair, and Shaw Lodge and its window-boxes knew her no more.

I have had a little money left me lately, and I have married Gertrude myself. I showed Binks that I bore him no malice for his former affection to my wife by asking him to be best man at my wedding. But he took the compliment in very ill part, and though he sent Gertrude an exceedingly handsome present, he could never be brought to forgive what he is pleased to term my "treachery." And just look at the scrape I got him out of!

He still lives at Oldfield House, and I am told looks as youthful as ever. He drives about as usual, and pays marked attentions to pretty young ladies who are kind enough to allow him a sort of grandfatherly familiarity.

But I think his courting days are over!

"OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL

CHAPTER I.

"AND so I am not to have the pleasure of a dance, Miss Brown?" said the young guardsman, in his most drawling voice, glancing as he spoke into the great mirror before which he was standing, and caressingly stroking his handsome moustache.

The girl, seated on the divan beneath the great mirror, looked up at him with secret but unmitigated scorn.

"No; I haven't any left."

He looked languidly incredulous. The girl flushed angrily. She could have filled her programme exactly three times over. But it certainly was not necessary to state so patent a fact to the impertinent fop before her.

"You see, I saw your programme when I picked it up a moment ago," he said, as if struck by a bright thought.

"I wished to keep some dances."

"And you have not one for me?" with another languidly approving look into the mirror.

"Certainly not," thinking how con-

temptible it was to see a man admiring himself in a glass.

"Well, I'm sorry," listlessly. "But I thought I would ask you."

"And I've refused you," with cutting emphasis.

The young man lounged languidly away, leaving Miss Hope Brown fairly scarlet with indignation.

She hated Mr. Gilbert Egerton with all her soul. He had called her a pert little schoolgirl, and had sneered at her father for being an oil and colourman. His comment on herself did not trouble her much, but that on her father was intolerable. It was not an aristocratic trade, but her father was an honest, hard-working man, and his life was infinitely nobler than that of Mr. Gilbert Egerton's, for all the blue blood that ran in his veins.

Mrs. Egerton, of Meadowlands, was giving a ball that night. The Egertons were the first people in the county, and their entertainments were celebrated far and wide. This one was of more than usual magnificence, for it was given in honour of their second son Gilbert's return from the Egyptian campaign.

Not that, as Miss Hope Brown contemptuously remarked to herself, as she looked round at the lights, and flowers, and crowd of guests, his services there required so much celebration, for he had been wounded almost at the beginning of the campaign, and had never been allowed to go to the front at all. Still, though he had returned undecorated, and without even having gained his company, his parents were equally pleased to see him, and had made a great deal of him during the leave he was spending at home with them. Other people made a great fuss over him too, just as if he were not conceited enough already, thought Miss Hope Brown. She was staying with his mother at the same time. She was quite sick of it all, and had persistently snubbed him ever since the day of his arrival, nearly a month ago now; but nothing could disturb his ineffable self-respect. In her secret heart she believed him to be a malingerer. But the band was playing another waltz in the ball-room, and Miss Hope Brown, going off with her next partner, recovered a little from her anger and vexation.

For a brief interval the two large drawing-rooms, thrown up to the guests, were empty, as all the dancers gathered in the ball-room.

The distant strains of the melancholy-sweet waltz music, and the soft splash of waters in the conservatories opening off the greater drawing-room, were the only sounds that broke the silence. The air was fragrant with flowers and the perfume of women's dresses. A girl had dropped her fan, and it lay on the Oriental rug at the foot of the divan below the mirror. The drawing-rooms looked on to the stone terrace, from which, here and there, short flights of steps led down into the grounds. All the doors and windows stood wide open to the fragrant coolness of the summer night. The rooms stood deserted. Then a tall figure stepped noiselessly from the terrace outside into the room, pausing for a second, under the Venetian lamp overhead, to listen and look lest any of the dancers still lingered.

The light fell full on the man's face, and, in the bright coloured rays, it showed pale and worn. He was a tall, slenderly built man of about twenty-eight. He was dressed in rough and ragged artisan's clothes, which had a most incongruous effect on the rest of his appearance.

His face, though worn and drawn, was exceedingly handsome in feature, while nothing could disguise the aristocratic distinction of his figure and appearance. His hands were white, too, slender of shape, and bore no marks of the toil his dress suggested. A curious expression, very bitter and very melancholy, came into his face as he stared round on the luxurious magnificence about him.

"It seems a long time ago," he said to himself. "And it will be longer yet before I can get back to this. I wonder how I shall endure it!" But the passion died out as quickly as it had kindled, and he laughed cynically. "It's rather early yet, speculating on my powers of endurance. It will be a bad look-out for me if they are going to fail yet!"

His eyes fell on the low divan where Miss Brown had been sitting. He had been outside on the terrace, hiding in the shadows cast by a great flowering shrub, while the little scene between her and Gilbert Egerton had been enacted. He had seen and heard it all.

"Stuck-up young jackanapes!" he muttered savagely. "That lovely little girl took him down!"

He caught sight of the fan lying where she had dropped it.

With another cautious look about him, he stepped swiftly to it, and raising it,

stood thoughtfully opening and shutting it.

It was a very costly one. The sticks of ivory inlaid with gold. It was faintly perfumed with the scent of the owner.

"I daresay she won't miss it," he said, after a second's reflection, "and it will be a nice little keepsake. She was exceedingly pretty. I wonder who she is?"

He kissed the fan lightly, smiling a little as he did so.

The distant music was dying away.

In a few more moments the rooms would be thronged once more with the dancers.

He took one last long look about him, then drew back to the doorway and vanished, a darker shadow, into the shadows of the summer night.

The ball went on. Everybody said it was one of the most enjoyable that the Egertons had ever given. Miss Hope Brown had never been to such a splendid entertainment before. She had only left school a few months ago, and this visit of hers to Meadowlands was her first entrance into society. She had been here now for more than a month, for Mrs. Egerton would not part with her, and her father, delighted that she, his only child, and the apple of his eye, should have this chance of entering into a set far above any he could ever have hoped to draw about her himself had wished her to stay.

She was exceedingly pretty. Her manners were the most winning in the world, in spite of the oil and colourman father. She was well educated. She dressed charmingly, for her taste was good, and her father, who had made his fortune, stinted her in nothing; and her social success, launched as she had been by Mrs. Egerton, of Meadowlands, on to the sea of society, had been most flattering. Those who knew of the oil and colourman father kindly overlooked the fact. To-night she was acknowledged one of the beauties of the evening, and no one troubled, under the present circumstances, to question why Mrs. Egerton, so rigidly exclusive as a rule, should have shown so much honour to the daughter of a man who had made his money in trade.

It had all been so delightful that, until to-night, she had enjoyed herself thoroughly.

To-night, just when her success was complete, and her cup of enjoyment full, she was conscious of a sense of blankness.

That speech of Gilbert Egerton's, spitefully repeated to her by a man whom she

had snubbed, instinctively disliking him—one of those malicious, mean-spirited snobs to be met in the "best sets" as well as in the lowest—rankled in her heart.

She loved her father dearly, and the suspicion that all these denizens of the great world who petted her would probably sneer at her father as Gilbert Egerton had done, wounded her to the quick. As the evening wore on the feeling deepened. She was full of a hot resentment against the pettiness and vulgarity of society.

The fact was, she was over-strung and over-excited. The sudden change from the peaceful monotony of her schooldays to this whirl of fashionable life had been too much for her. Her nerves had not yet steadied themselves under the pressure of this ceaseless round of pleasure and amusement.

It was while supper was being served, in the great banqueting hall, that, evading her partners, she slipped away into the grounds. The clocks were striking twelve as she left the house, driven by a great longing for the coolness and stillness of the summer night, and a passionate wish to cut herself adrift from the brilliant crowd in which she and her father could find no true sympathy. For she ranged herself on his side against all the world of rank and fashion. In her over-excitement she became morbid, and, under those conditions, naturally unjust. There were, even among that pleasure-pursuing throng, in spite of titles and blue blood, and the anomalies of inherited absurdities and prejudices, some who were perfectly capable of appreciating Mr. Brown at his real value.

She walked on, down the moonlit pathways, avoiding that part of the grounds where the dancers might come.

She turned out of the flower garden proper into the "wilderness," a portion of the grounds where the trees and shrubs had been allowed to grow more thickly, casting, to-night, great shadows in the moonlight.

There was an old summer-house there. It stood in a hollow, just where the garden again merged into the chase.

It was almost shut in by the overgrown trees and shrubs.

The position was lovely, and, to add to its picturesque wildness, a great mass of granite boulders lay scattered or heaped up, forming a background to the house itself. These were now almost entirely

covered by a tangle of ivy and creepers, or by the brambles and shrubs which had grown up between them. Some of the spaces which had been originally left open for a passage between the rocks were now an impenetrable mass of briar and bush.

The summer-house was very old. There had apparently always been one there, renewed, or rebuilt, as time and weather destroyed it. The present one had been allowed to fall into complete disrepair. Mrs. Egerton was almost the only member of the household who ever came that way.

It looked desolate enough in the moonlight as Hope stepped from the path between the trees into the open space before it.

For the first time she felt nervous. She regretted having come so far at that time of the night.

The hooting of an owl from the branch of an overhanging tree made her start, every nerve leaping with an eerie dismay.

Something stirred like a ripple through the still fringe of bracken that grew at the foot of the rocks, suggesting a weird fancy of some lurking, living thing watching her from its place of hiding, and she half turned to fly from a spot so isolated that any evil might come on her without her cries for help being heard.

The next moment, ashamed of her cowardice, she crossed the opening to the summer-house. Even in the picturesque and softening effects of the moonlight its dilapidations were plainly visible. It was built partly of stone. The walls were almost entirely hidden by creepers and mosses. But the woodwork was rotting. Mildew and the fret of weather had worked their will on everything. The door on its broken hinges was fastened up with a rusty chain. The coloured panes of the windows were so thick with dust and cobwebs that it was impossible to see through them into the interior of the building. They gave back no cheerful reflection of the moonlight showing on them as that lonely, eerie feeling touched the girl again. She felt that they might be the dead eyes of a dead house. She wondered why Mrs. Egerton seemed to be so fond of the place.

Then with a stifled cry she turned hurriedly, white and trembling, towards the great clump of shrubs that shut in the summer-house on the right. A sound like the groan of some hurt creature in

sharpest pain had suddenly broken on the lonely stillness of the night about her.

It was followed by a rustling and snapping of twigs, as something or some one forced a way through the undergrowth.

There was another groan this time, accompanied by an exclamation, certainly not fit for a lady's ears, which sent the blood tingling back into her face again.

The wounded creature was decidedly human, and not choice in his language.

The thought of poachers and other night desperadoes flashed through her mind with the keen consciousness of a very valuable pearl necklace she was wearing round her throat. The poachers had been particularly daring and active lately, while one of them had so black a record——

The bushes were thrust aside, and a man staggered out into the open a yard or two from her side.

His face, ghastly white, was stained with blood. One arm hung heavily at his side; the blood, trickling down it, had soaked the sleeve of the artisan's jacket he wore.

For a second they stood staring at each other in the moonlight, he with a stupid, dazed look in his eyes, as if he mistook the white-clad, slender figure, with its bare throat and arms, standing there in the moonshine, for some mystic creature from another sphere.

CHAPTER II.

THE poachers had been giving Mr. Egerton's gamekeepers an anxious time. On the evening of the ball, Eason, the head gamekeeper, had received a mysterious hint to the effect that one Ned Molloy, whose daring and unscrupulous defiance of the game laws had hitherto met with notorious success, would that night be taking a look at the Squire's pheasants.

If there was one man on the face of the earth Eason would have like to have seen shut up between four walls of a prison, Ned Molloy was that man. It was currently believed among his fellow gamekeepers that to assist successfully at his capture—either alive or dead—Eason would cheerfully have done his time between four prison walls himself. But Molloy took care that Eason should not run the risk of being tried for manslaughter, and so far had carefully managed to escape being caught red-handed.

The hint might only have been a blind ; but as it was given by a woman who felt that she had the right to complain of Molloy's conduct towards herself personally, Eason was inclined to make use of it.

"If there is one time when you can be sure human nature is speakin' the truth, it is when its heart is a-bubblin' over with jealousy," he said to one of the under-gamekeepers, who ventured to question the value of the hint.

It was about twelve o'clock. The ball was in full swing up at the house, while Mr. Egerton's gamekeepers were faithfully patrolling his preserves. Eason's round brought him, a few minutes after midnight, across that of his youngest gamekeeper. The point at which they had agreed to meet was on the outer edge of the chase, which skirted the grounds of the house on two sides.

"Seen anything, Ford?" asked Eason in a whisper, as they stepped cautiously towards each other, under cover of the trees.

"No, I don't believe we shall either!" said the other, in a slightly sulky tone. "It's all a plant to get us on a wrong——"

Eason grasped his arm with a grip of steel.

They stood in deep shadow, at the entrance of a narrow glade.

The moon's rays, piercing here and there the thick overhanging foliage, lighted up distinctly the farther end of the glade, where it merged into the chase.

It touched the figure of a man, who seemed to be trying to keep in the shadow as he stepped for a second out of the chase into the open, then vanished back again into the shelter of the underbush.

It almost seemed as if he too had caught sight of the gamekeepers.

"Come," whispered Eason, in a whisper of suppressed exultation. "That's one of the villains, anyway."

He sprang forward, followed by his companion.

At the same instant, the lurking figure flashed for a moment into the moonlight, as it darted across the head of the glade towards a narrow pathway at the other side. As the light struck it, Eason recognised the tall, lithe figure of the arch-

poacher Molloy, the fleetest-footed vagabond in the county. If he succeeded in reaching that narrow pathway, his escape was next to certain. But he limped slightly as he ran. Eason's quick eyes detected the faltering of the light step.

"Curse you, you shan't escape me this time, Ned Molloy!" cried Eason as he ran. "You'd better give in!" A note in the menacing voice made the fugitive wheel swiftly round, and the moonlight gleamed on something bright in his hand. It flashed up, covering Eason as he pressed on.

"It isn't Molloy!" said Ford, just behind. "Good Heavens!" in the same breath.

The next second there were three short, sharp cracks, almost simultaneous. Then the smoking gun dropped from Eason's hand, and staggering, he fell.

The poacher, apparently sure of his shot, had turned almost as he fired. When Ford, after that first involuntary rush to his companion, looked again, he had vanished.

"Curse him, whoever he was!" he said between his set teeth, as he tenderly lifted the wounded man.

"I'm all right." Eason opened his eyes. "Follow Molloy," he gasped. "The others will be coming when they hear. Curse it all!" with a burst of savage anger and disappointment. "If you don't, I'll——" He made a movement to rise, only to sink back with a groan.

Ford saw that it was best to obey. The sound of the firing was already hurrying up the others.

He ran on into the wood. But there was no sign of the poacher.

The other men came up, to find Eason senseless.

Ford, returning, told them what had happened, and as soon as Eason had been conveyed to his cottage, which luckily was not far off, and the doctor fetched, they all joined in the search.

But in spite of a most thorough investigation of the whole grounds, they were reluctantly compelled to acknowledge that once more Ned Molloy had escaped them.

The doctor thought so badly of Eason's wound that a message was sent up to the house to Mr. Gilbert Egerton.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX.

"It's a jolly little place enough!"

"I think it's lovely."

There was a certain tone of regret, of lingering, reluctant farewell, in both voices; though in Julian's case it was light and patronising; in Clemence's, dreamy and tender. As Julian spoke he shifted his position slightly as he leant against the iron railing by which they stood, and let his eyes wander over the scene before them with condescending approval.

They were standing on the somewhat embryonic "sea-front" of what a few years before had been a fishing village, and was now struggling, rather inefficiently, to become a watering-place. Such season as the place could boast was entirely confined to the summer months; to the frequenters of winter resorts it was absolutely unknown; consequently its intrinsic charms at the moment—in all the lassitude and monotony left by departed glory—might have been considered conspicuous by their absence. But it was a glorious winter's day. A slight sprinkling of snow had been frozen on the roofs of the somewhat depressed-looking houses and on the unsightliness of the unfinished sea-front; and brilliant sunshine, almost warm in spite of the keen, frosty air, was glorifying alike the deserted little town, the country beyond, and the sparkling, dancing sea. The frosty, invigorating brightness found a responsive chord

in Julian's heart this morning; he was not always so susceptible to such simple, natural influences. He was in a good humour with the place; he had spent two wholly satisfactory days there—two days, moreover, which had had much the same influence upon his moral tone as a change to bracing air and simple, wholesome food would have on a physique accustomed to dissipation.

His survey ended finally with Clemence's face. She was standing at his side looking out over the sea, her eyes intent and full of feeling, her beautiful face hushed and still, absorbed by the mysterious charm of the ceaseless movement and trouble of the bright water stretching away before her.

"What are you looking at, Clemence?" he said boyishly.

She lifted her eyes to his quite gravely and simply.

"Only the sea," she said. "It is so beautiful, I feel as if I never could leave off looking at it. It makes me feel—oh, I can't tell you, but it is like something great and strong to take away with one!" She looked away again. "Oh, I wish, I wish we need not go!" she said with a little sigh.

"I wish we needn't," returned Julian; he had been dimly conscious of something in her eyes and voice which made her previous words, simple as they seemed, almost unintelligible to him, and he caught at her last sentence as containing an idea to which he could respond. "It's an awful nuisance, isn't it? And do you know it is time we started? Never mind. We'll come down again soon!"

They stood for another moment; Clemence looking out at the sunny sea, Julian taking another careless compre-

hensive view of the whole scene; and then, as though those last looks had contained their respective farewells, they turned with one accord and walked away in the direction of the railway station. And as if in turning her back upon the sunlit sea she had turned her back also upon something less definite and tangible, a certain gravity and wistfulness crept gradually over Clemence's face as they went; crept over it to settle down into a sadness most unusual to it as the train carried them quickly away towards London. Julian, sitting opposite her, was vaguely struck by her expression.

"Are you awfully sorry to go back, Clemence?" he said.

She started slightly, and looked at him with a faint smile.

"I suppose I am!" she said. "We have been very happy, haven't we?" There was a wistful regret in her voice which touched him somehow, and he answered her demonstratively, with a cheery and enthusiastic augury for the future. Clemence smiled again; again rather faintly. "I know!" she said. "I mean I hope so. Only—I don't know what's the matter with me! I feel as if—something were finished!"

Julian broke into a boyish laugh. Her depression was by no means displeasing to him; it was a tribute to his importance, to her dependence on him; and the necessity for "cheering her up" implied the exercise of that superiority and authority in which he delighted.

"Why, what a dear little goose you are, Clemence!" he said, leaning forward to take her hands in his. "A 'Friday to Monday' can't last for ever, you know, but it can be repeated again and again. Why, I shall be up every day—every single day, I promise you. I shouldn't wonder if I found I could spend the evening with you to-morrow! Won't that console you?"

She did not answer him, but she took one of his hands in hers and pressed it to her cheek. His consolation had hardly touched that strange oppression which weighed upon her, and Julian, in high feather, and quite unaware that only his voice was heard by her, his words passing her by unheeded, had been talking at great length about all the happiness before them, when she said, in a hesitating, far-away voice:

"Could you—could you come home with me this afternoon?"

Julian paused a moment. The question was hardly the response his words had demanded. Then he said decisively:

"Quite impossible, I am sorry to say. I would if I could, you know, dear, but it's quite impossible!"

She gave his hand a little quick pressure.

"I know, of course," she murmured gently. She paused a moment, and then said in a low voice, rather irrelevantly as it seemed: "Julian"—his name still came rather hesitatingly from her lips—"do you think—do you like Mrs. Jackson?"

Mrs. Jackson was the name of the woman whose rooms Julian had taken for her, and he started slightly at the question.

"She's not a bad sort," he said, with rather startled consideration. "At least, she seems all right. Isn't she nice to you, Clemence? Don't you like the rooms?"

"Oh, yes! yes!" she said quickly, almost as though she reproached herself for saying anything that could suggest to him even a shadow of discontent on her part. "I like them so very, very much. It is only—I don't know what exactly. Somehow, I don't think Mrs. Jackson is quite a nice woman." She had spoken the last words hesitatingly and with difficulty, almost as though they came from her against her will.

Julian glanced at her quickly.

"What makes you think that, Clemence?" he said, with judicial masterfulness. "Have you any reason, I mean?"

But Clemence was hardly able to define, even in her own pure mind, what it was that jarred upon her in her landlady's manner; and to Julian she was utterly unable to put her feelings into words. Her hasty disclaimer and her hesitating beginnings and falterings, however, served to remove the misgiving which had stirred him lest some knowledge of his own real life should have come to the woman's knowledge. He was the readier to let himself be reassured and to dismiss the subject in that the train was slackening speed for the last time before reaching London, and he intended to move into a first-class smoking carriage at the approaching station. Julian was well aware of the risks of discovery involved in these journeys with Clemence; and though he faced them nonchalantly enough, he used wits with which no one who knew him only in his capacities of man about town and budding barrister would have credited him to reduce them to a minimum. To be seen emerging from a

third-class carriage at Victoria Station was a wholly unnecessary risk to run, and he avoided it accordingly.

"You mustn't be fanciful, Clemmie," he said, now in a lordly and airy fashion. "I've no doubt Mrs. Jackson is a very jolly woman, as a matter of fact. Look here, dear, would you mind if I went and had a smoke now? It isn't much further, you know, and one mustn't smoke in hospital, you see!"

Clemence was very pale when he joined her on the platform at Victoria—joined her after a quick glance round to see whether he must prepare himself for an encounter with an acquaintance; and she did not speak, only looked up at him with a grave, steady smile which made her face sadder than before. His announcement of his intention of putting her into a hansom drew from her an absolutely horrified protest. She would go in an omnibus, she told him hurriedly, or in the underground! She had never been in a cab! It would cost so much! But when he overruled her, a little impatiently—it was not yet dark, and he did not wish to remain longer than was necessary with her in Victoria Station—she submitted timidly, with a sudden slight flushing of her cheeks.

"A four-wheeler, Julian!" she murmured pleadingly, as they emerged into the station yard. With a lofty smile at what he supposed to be nervousness on her part, he signified assent with a little condescending gesture, and stopped before a waiting cab.

"Here you are," he said. "Jump in!"

She got in obediently, and as he shut the door she turned to him through the open window.

"Good-bye, Julian!" she said, in a low, sweet voice.

"Good-bye!" he said cheerily, smiling at her. Her face in its dingy frame looked whiter, sweeter, and more steadfast than ever, and it made a curiously sudden and distinct impression on Julian's mental retina. Then the cab turned lumberingly round, and he moved smartly away. He did not see that as the cab turned, that sweet white face appeared at the other window and followed him with wide, wistful eyes until the moving life of London parted them.

Julian was on his way to the club. He had a vague disinclination to the thought of going home; the house in Chelsea was always more or less distasteful to him now, and he had no intention of going thither

before it was necessary. It was nearly dark by the time his destination was reached, and as his hansom drew up a few yards from the club entrance he could only see that the way was stopped by a carriage from which two ladies and a gentleman had just emerged. It was the younger of the two ladies who glanced in his direction, and said, in a pretty, uninterested voice:

"Isn't that Mr. Romaine?"

Marston Loring was the man addressed, and he shot a keen, considering glance at the speaker—Miss Pomeroy. The fact that her eyes had noticed Julian when his quick ones had not, trivial as it was, was not without its significance to the man whose stock-in-trade, so to speak, was founded on clever estimate and appreciation of trifles. Was Miss Pomeroy not so entirely unobservant a nonentity as she was supposed to be, he asked himself, not for the first time, or was there another reason for her quickness in this instance?

"So it is!" he said. "Hullo, old fellow!"

Julian came eagerly up to the group as it paused for him on the club steps, and shook hands in his pleasantest manner with Mrs. Pomeroy.

"I do believe it's a ladies' afternoon!" he exclaimed gaily. "What luck for me! How do you do?" shaking hands with Miss Pomeroy. "I'd actually forgotten all about it, and I've only just come up from Brighton! Loring, you must ask me to join your party, old man! Tell him so, Miss Pomeroy, please!"

Whether strict veracity is to be imputed to a young man who professes unbounded satisfaction at finding fashionable "ladies' teas" in full swing at his club when he has just come off a journey is perhaps doubtful; but Julian threw himself into the spirit of the moment with a frank gaiety and enthusiasm which was not to be surpassed. The greater number of the ladies who were sipping club tea as if it were a hitherto untasted nectar, and gazing at club furniture as though it were provision for the comfort of some strange animal, were acquaintances of his; and as he moved about among them his passage seemed to be marked by merrier laughs, a quicker fire of the jokes of the moment, and brighter faces than prevailed elsewhere. He was enjoying himself so thoroughly, apparently, that he was unable to tear himself away, and when he left the club at last, he sprang into a hansom,

and told the driver to "put the horse along." He and his mother were dining out together, and he had left himself barely sufficient time to dress.

He ran up the steps, flinging the driver his fare, let himself in with his latchkey, and proceeded to his room up two steps at a time. When he emerged thence, twenty minutes later, in evening dress, he was congratulating himself on having "done the trick capitally, and well up to time."

He was a little surprised, therefore, as he came downstairs, to find his mother's maid waiting for him outside the drawing-room door with the information that Mrs. Romaine was already in the carriage; and he ran hastily downstairs, put on his overcoat, and proceeded to join her.

"I'm awfully sorry, dear," he said, with eager apology. "I thought it was earlier. The fact is, I was awfully late getting in. I found 'ladies' teas' going on at the club—so awfully stupid of me to forget—you might have liked to go—and it was rather good fun. How are you, dear?"

He had let himself into the brougham as he spoke, had shut the door, and seated himself by the figure he could only dimly see sitting rather back in the corner so that little or no light fell on her face. He had kissed her, hardly stemming the flood of his eloquence for the purpose; and he now hardly waited for her word or two of reply before he plunged once more into eager, amusing talk. He did not give his mother time to do more than answer monosyllabically, and it followed that her silence did not strike him. He sprang out, when the carriage stopped, to give her his hand, but before he had given his instruction to the coachman, and followed her into the house, she had disappeared into the ladies' cloak-room. Consequently it was not until she came to him as he waited to follow her into the drawing-room that he really saw her. As his eyes rested on the figure coming towards him, he suddenly saw, not it, but a sweet, white face with wistful eyes looking at him from out of a dingy frame.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALWAYS excellently dressed, Mrs. Romaine's appearance at that moment was brilliant; almost excessively brilliant it seemed for a small dinner party. Her frock was of the most pronounced type of full-dress, and she wore diamonds, not many, but so disposed, as was her reddish-

brown hair, as to make the greatest possible effect. But the detail which had caught her son's experienced eye, and which had brought before him by some unaccountable law of contrast that other woman's face, lay in the fact that to-night for the first time his mother was slightly "made up." The colour on her cheeks, the bright effectiveness of her eyes, was the result of art. It made her look haggard, Julian decided with careless, indifferent distaste, and then he was following her into the room.

She had hardly paused to speak to him; apparently she imagined that they were late.

They were widely separated at dinner, and were not thrown together, as it happened, during the whole evening. But Mrs. Romaine's personality was a factor in the party not to be ignored that night; she was delightful, everybody said; and to Julian that newly acquired sense of his mother's artificiality was accentuated as the evening passed on into something like repugnance; a repugnance which, when he was seated with her at last in the brougham and driving home, produced in him a strong disinclination to rouse himself to an assumption of vivacity, and made him occupy himself with his own thoughts so exclusively that he never noticed that his mother uttered not a single word.

"Good night, mother!" he said absently, as they stood together in the hall. He was stooping to kiss her when she stopped him with a slight, peremptory gesture.

"I want to speak to you!" she said. Her voice was tense and a little hoarse. Without another word, without so much as glancing at him, she passed him and led the way to his smoking-room; turned up the lamp with a quick, hard gesture, and then turned and faced him.

All the colour had faded from Julian's face, and he had followed her slowly. With the first sound of her voice the conviction had come to him that he was discovered. There were certain weaknesses in him, hitherto undeveloped by the circumstances of his life, but radical factors in his character. Morally speaking he was a coward. His hour had come, and he was afraid to meet it. He came just inside the door and stood leaning against the writing-table, confronting his mother, but neither looking at her nor speaking.

"Tell me where you have been since Friday!" she said, low and peremptorily; and then she stopped herself abruptly,

putting out her hand as though to prevent him from speaking, as a spasm of pain distorted her face. "No!" she said, in a hoarse, breathless way. "No, don't! You'll tell me a lie. Don't! I know!"

She had put out her hand and was steadying herself by the high oak mantelpiece—part of her recent present to Julian—but her face was rigid and set, and her eyes, full of a strange, indefinable agony, which she seemed to be all the while holding desperately at bay, never left the pale, downcast, almost sullen face opposite her.

With a determined wrench and setting in motion of all his faculties, Julian pulled himself together so far as to take refuge in that sure resort of the deficient in moral courage—an assumption of jaunty and light-hearted non-comprehension. Perhaps he had never in his life been more like his mother than he was at that moment as he threw back his head and answered, with an affected gaiety which was somewhat hollow and unsuccessful:

"What do you know, dear? You're coming it rather strong, aren't you?"

"I know that you have been living with a common work-girl somewhere in Camden Town for a month or more!"

The words were spoken in the same hoarse voice which rang now, low as it was, with an intolerable disgust. But its expression seemed to affect Julian not at all. The words themselves were occupying all his perception. A quick frown of consideration appeared on his forehead, as though some relief or reprieve had come to him, bringing with it possibilities the skilful turning to account of which called into play his mental faculties, and in so doing strung up his nerve. He dropped his artificiality of manner, and seemed to brace himself to meet the emergency in which he found himself. The situation had evidently suddenly altered its character for him. He was no longer cowed by it.

There was a pause—a pause in which Mrs. Romaine's eyes seemed to dilate and contract, and dilate again under the suffering to which she allowed expression in neither tone nor gesture; and then there came from Julian four awkward, hardly audible words, jerked out rather than spoken, with long pauses intervening:

"How do you know?"

A short, sharp breath came from Mrs. Romaine, and then she said, with cold decisiveness, though it seemed that nothing would take that hoarseness from her voice:

"It matters very little how I know. That I know by one chance; that some one else may know by another; some one else again by another—the details in each case, when the chances are innumerable, are nothing! Have you lived all this time in London not to know that discovery is inevitable—to wonder 'how' when it comes?"

There was a bitterness, a keenness of scorn in her voice which stung him like a lash, and he answered hotly:

"After all, mother, we are not living in Arcadia! We don't talk about these things; and I'm awfully sorry, I'm sure, that this should have come to your knowledge. I'm awfully sorry to offend you; but, hang it all, I'm not worse than lots of fellows about!"

His tone had gathered confidence and defiance as he went on, and it seemed to shake her a little. Her hold on the mantelpiece tightened, and she spoke quickly and a little nervously.

"It's very likely," she said. "I don't want to argue the principle with you. Young men have their own ideas, I know; but how many young men—drop out? How many young men, with good positions, good chances, somehow or other get into bad odour; get to be not received—or, if they are received, it is with certain reservation—through this kind of thing? Oh, of course I don't say it's inevitable. There are lots of men about, as you say! But it's an awful risk. In the case of a young man like you, with no title to the position you hold in society but your—your personality, don't you see, it is a double and treble risk. It is playing with edged tools; it is holding a knife to your own throat. You would go under so horribly easily."

She paused abruptly, as though the image before her eyes were too terrible to her to be pursued further, and tried to moisten her dry lips, on which the touch of paint had cracked now, showing how white they were beneath. The ghastliness of the incongruity between her manner and the superficialities of which she spoke was indescribable. Julian did not speak; he was moving one foot to and fro slowly over the carpet, at which he gazed immovably, and his mother went on almost immediately:

"You must give it up, Julian," she said incisively. "I will do anything that is necessary in the way of money; I don't want to be hard upon you, my boy. Oh,

my boy! Anything the girl wants you shall have; but you must break with her at once."

She paused again, but still Julian did not speak; still he did not raise his eyes. She went on with a growing insistence in her voice which went hand in hand with a growing agony of appeal:

"If you don't see the necessity now, you must believe me when I tell you that you will—you will. Look, dear! your life is surely not so dull that you need run after such distraction as that. You shall marry if you want to. You shall marry any one you like. But you must—you must give this up. Julian——" She stopped for a moment, and her voice grew thin, almost faint, as she pressed so heavily on the carving by which she held that her hand was bruised and blackened. "Julian, I am not telling you what it has been to me to know that you have deceived me. I am not going to try and make you feel—I don't want you to feel it, dear—what it has been to me to go over your home-life of the last few weeks and know that you have lied to me at every turn—to me, who have only wanted to make you happy. I won't reproach you. Perhaps young men think it a kind of right—a kind of right——" She repeated the sentence, unfinished as it was, as though it contained an idea to which she clung. "It is not for my sake,—to spare my feelings, that I tell you you must give it up. It is for your own. Julian, my boy, you must believe me."

Her words, quivering with entreaty, died away; her eyes, full of supplication, were fixed on his; and Julian spoke—spoke without lifting his eyes from the ground.

"Suppose I married her?" he said in a low, shame-faced voice.

"What!" The monosyllable rang out sharp and vibrating, and Mrs. Romaine, all softness or relaxation struck from her face and figure in one sudden bracing of every muscle, stood staring at him out of eyes alive with horror.

"Suppose—I married—her!"

"Supposing that—I will tell you! You would have to keep her and yourself! You would have no more of my money, and you would never be acknowledged in my house again!" Her low voice was like fine, cold steel, and she paused. Then quite suddenly, as though the horror kept at bay in her eyes had leapt up and mastered her in an instant, she flung out her hands wildly, crying: "Julian, Julian! You are

not married! Tell me, tell me you are not married!"

And Julian, white to the very lips, said low and hurriedly:

"No!"

There was a long silence. With a choked, hysterical cry, Mrs. Romaine dropped into a chair near her, and covered her face with her hands. Julian drew out his pocket-handkerchief and mechanically wiped his forehead. At last he began, in a nervous, uneven voice:

"Mother, look here, I—you don't quite understand me! I—she—it's—it's not the kind of girl you think!" He stopped and drew his hand desperately before his eyes. That innocent white face, in its dingy frame, what did it want before his eyes now? How could he get on if he kept looking at it. "She—we—it was my fault! Mother, look here, I ought!"

Mrs. Romaine took her hands away from her face and clenched them together.

"You shall not," she said in a low, steady voice.

"She—she—was an awfully good girl, don't you know. She's not—of course she's not one of our sort, but—she would learn. Mother, after all, why not? Nothing else can—can make it right!"

"Nothing else can ruin you completely!" was the steady answer. "You shall never do it if I can prevent it. I have told you what I would do; think it well over. Think what it would mean to you to have not one farthing but what you can earn! To be cut by every one who knows you! To be without a chance of any kind. I told you that if you married I would disown you! Now I tell you something else! Break off this miserable connection and you shall have, as I said, anything in reason to give the girl in compensation once and for all. Refuse to do so and I will cut off your allowance until you come to your senses!"

"Mother!" he cried fiercely. "By Heaven, mother!"

"You can take your choice!" was the unmoved answer.

Her face was sharp and haggard; the artificial colour stood out on it in great patches, throwing into relief the livid pallor beneath. She had thrown aside her cloak as though the physical oppression was unbearable to her, and the contrast between her face and her gorgeous dress with its glittering ornaments was horrible.

A smothered oath broke from the

young man, and lifting his right hand, he began to rub it slowly up and down the back of his head as an expression of heavy, fierce cogitation settled down upon his face. To his unutterable surprise as he made the gesture, there stole over his mother's face an expression of such deadly terror as he had never before seen. He stopped involuntarily, and she staggered to her feet, holding out two quivering, imploring hands. For the first time in his life Julian was using a gesture habitual in his dead father; for the first time in his life, looking into her son's face, Mrs. Romaine saw there the face of William Romaine.

"My boy!" she gasped. "My boy. Don't do that! Don't look like that, for Heaven's sake! For Heaven's sake!"

She swayed for a moment to and fro, and then fell heavily forward into his arms.

BY THE AVON IN APRIL.

IF there be one season more suitable than another for a trip to Shakespeare's Stratford, that season is spring; and if there be a month fitter than another, that month is April. For apart from the beauty presented by pure English landscape, when Nature begins to don her verdant robe, we should remember that it was in the month of April that the world's poet made not only his first entrance on, but his final exit from the scene of "this strange eventful history." Sentiment is out of fashion nowadays, but there are certain emotional sensations which, being ineradicable in civilised man, alike defy fashion and time, and the Shakespearean sentiment is assuredly one of them. Few cultivated people would wish to banish this of all others from their lives, however afraid of incurring ridicule. The stupendous, wide-reaching, undying genius of the man, the cloud of obscurity which shrouds all but the broadest features of his life, the scarcity of reliable relics and records of his personality, all serve to invest such as remain with the highest interest and value; and since these are to be found in greater abundance in the town and neighbourhood of his birth and death than anywhere else in the wide world, it is not wonderful that Stratford-on-Avon should possess an attraction far beyond that of any other locality celebrated as the cradle or tomb of some distinguished intellect.

These things being granted as ample reasons for the popularity of the pilgrimage, it is easy to show why it should be especially performed during that week which embraces the twenty-third of April. Sentiment once admitted, we carry it to the anniversary of birth and death as a matter of course, albeit three hundred years and more have elapsed since the events we desire to revive and celebrate happened. When we stand on the actual ground once trodden by the revered dead, their footsteps seem to fall with a louder echo, as year by year the date recurs. When face to face with the places and the objects on which his gentle, loving, yet penetrating eyes have rested, and which he may have touched and handled many a score of times, and from every item of which he drew his profound, no less than simple knowledge, his similes and symbols, interpreting each and all with his own majestic words; why, when we do this, we say that the imagination travels with greater facility, and pictures more vividly the aspect of the man and the times in which he lived and moved and had his being.

Here, to wit in Stratford town, we can conjure up the quaint old, narrow, unpaved streets, the gable-ended, overhanging, half-timbered houses, peculiar to Merry England in these parts, and above all, the old house itself in Henley Street as it may have looked when the baby boy lay gazing up at the huge beam in the room where he first saw the light. The church and churchyard are once more peopled with the crowd habited in the quaint garb of the period as, fifty-three years later, they gathered in groups and knots along the lime-shadowed avenue awaiting the procession of mourners about to consign to the dust all that was perishable of that immortal intellect. Bending over the tomb itself, and gazing at the monument, what a new impressiveness they both acquire when we can count to a nicety the total of the vanished epochs! See, for instance, how the fact of actually standing on the spot affected Sir Walter Scott, when he on one occasion happened to pay a visit to Shakespeare's Stratford in the month of April, 1828. In his delightful journal he thus briefly gives us a hint of the feelings it aroused:

"We visited the tomb of the Mighty Wizard. It is in the bad taste of James the First's reign; but what a magic does the locality possess! There are stately

monuments of forgotten families; but when you have seen Shakespeare's, what care we for the rest? All around is Shakespeare's exclusive property."

His reference also to the actual birthplace, if slight, may be worth quoting, as showing at once how alive he was to all connected with it, and how humorously he dovetailed his sarcasm about parsimony and charity in with the true sentiment awakened by the town:

"After breakfast I asked after the old madwoman who was for some time tenant of Shakespeare's house, and conceived herself to be descended from the immortal poet. I learned she was dying. I thought to send her a sovereign, but this extension of our tour has left me no more than will carry me through my journey, and I do not like to run short upon the road. So I take credit for my good intention, and keep my sovereign—a cheap and not unusual mode of giving charity."

It was on a previous visit made in the autumn of 1821, that this other wizard, and his then companion, Mr. Stewart Rose, wrote their names on the wall of the house in Henley Street. There is no record of his having been led thither by the actual anniversary; but we must remember that travelling in his day was a very different business to what it is in the present. It was only in his passage to and fro between Edinburgh and London that he could ever do homage at the shrine, and shrines for which Warwickshire is celebrated—not forgetting that of Kenilworth, where he went, of course, more than once. He does not, oddly enough, on his final visit to Stratford as described in the journal on the eighth of April, 1828, seem to have remembered the additional significance which the particular month has, but it is hardly likely that he was wholly unobservant of it, or that it failed to add additional interest to the occasion, albeit he chanced to be there a week or two before the celebrated date itself. His mind was far too appreciative, we may be sure, for the twenty-third to have escaped him, although he does not mention it. However this may be, we, who have rail and steam at our command, and can put ourselves within that magic circle of the Midlands in the space of a few hours, should, as already urged, contrive to do so during what has been called the rainbow month, for, as it is in looking at the recorded date of the monument with our bodily eyes we are better able to tot up

the flight of time, so is it with the intermediate ages of that life which began and ended here—ended, alas! before the completion of those seven classified by himself in his own immortal lines.

Very conspicuously, for example, do we see in the grammar school in the High Street, amidst its crowd of urchins, the chubby boy of "small Latin and less Greek," "with shining morning face, creeping like snail, unwillingly to school." A while later we can get a peep of Charlcote Park, much as it must have appeared when that deer-lifting escapade happened. How its umbrageous shades helped Scott's imagination vividly to picture the Shakespearean times is again well worthy of citation:

"The Hall," he says, "is about three hundred years old, an old brick structure with a gate-house in advance. It is surrounded by venerable oaks, realising the imagery which Shakespeare loved so well to dwell upon; rich, verdant pastures extend on every side, and numerous herds of deer were reposing in the shade; all showed that the Lucy family had retained their land and beeves."

The descendant of Sir Thomas Lucy—the justice who rendered Warwickshire too hot for the poet, and drove him to London—who did the honours of his house to Sir Walter, it appears, told him that "the park from which Shakespeare stole the buck was not that which surrounds Charlcote, but belonged to a mansion at some distance where Sir Thomas Lucy resided at the time of the trespass. The tradition went that they hid the buck in a barn, part of which was standing a few years ago, but now totally decayed."

The whole story, of course, is apocryphal, but one cannot avoid letting it take its place with the rest for what it is worth, when wandering amidst the shades of the old town and the neighbouring Charlcote. The true spirit of their influence is faithfully depicted by Sir Walter in his final words touching this his last visit to Warwickshire.

It "gave me great pleasure," he writes, "it really brought Justice Shallow freshly before my eyes; the luces in his arms, 'which do become an old coat well,' were not more plainly portrayed in his own armorials in the Hall window than was his person in my mind's eye. There is a picture shown at the mansion as that of the old Sir Thomas, but Mr. Lucy conjectures it represents his son. There were

three descendants of the same name of Thomas. The party hath 'the eye severe, and beard of formal cut,' which fills up with judicious austerity the otherwise social physiognomy of the worshipful presence, with his 'fair round belly with fat capon lined.'"

For the sake of these things it is that we go to the shrine on the banks of the Avon; without them, and what they call up, the place can have no especial attraction; with them, the region is alive with romance and poetry. The dead past palpitates again, and carrying on our mental no less than our bodily ramblings, we see the man of gay yet thoughtful mien trudging over the fields 'twixt Stratford and Shottery on his love-making expeditions. We behold the church again by the river, where he took to wife the woman of his fancy, and despite its sacrilegious demolition, we can readily trace out at least the ground-plan of New Place, the edifice where he passed, in well-earned repose, his final days and ended them. You may linger there for a moment, if only to express amazement that such an edifice could have been so treated, and above all by hands which ought, beyond most others, to have preserved with reverence so sacred a relic from desecration.

The history of its destruction during the eighteenth century, an age distinguished for many a similar sacrilegious act, runs to the following effect. "In 1756," we are told by a devout Shakespearean, "the house was purchased by one Francis Gastrell, a reverend incumbent of some parish at Lichfield. This noble specimen of the Church's dignity began by cutting down the mulberry tree planted by Shakespeare's own hand, that precious emblem under which Garrick, Macklin, and others were entertained by Sir John Clopton in 1742. Nor did the building long escape Mr. Gastrell's iconoclastic hand. It was his custom to live at Lichfield, and to leave New Place without a tenant from year's end to year's end. In the absence of its owner, New Place was assessed to pay rates for the maintenance of the poor, and vowing that it should never cost him another shilling, the shameless cleric, 'dead,' as Garrick observed, 'to all Nature's finer feelings,' razed to the ground the building in which Shakespeare and Ben Jonson had made merry, and which must have been redolent with priceless memories."

Nevertheless, these and many more similar shadows, we say, come trooping through our minds with greater substance in them, when we are conscious that we stand, as it were, on the boards of the very theatre where they played their many parts, and acted out the domestic drama of real life, the interest in which can never die. The scenery, dresses, and decorations appear in a large degree to be extant still, and if altered and repainted in places, or adapted and contrived to suit our modern needs, there is yet enough and to spare of the real properties to foster the fond illusions of so laudable an imagining.

Filled with the Shakespearean sentiment, therefore, after this fashion, let us carry it a step farther, and, in so doing, find yet other reasons for undertaking the pilgrimage to the shrine during the month of smiles and tears. Never do the willow-fringed banks of the silver Avon show to greater advantage than on a fine day in April,

When daisies pied, and violets blue,
And ladies' smocks all silver-white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight.

If the moon should make the night vie with the day in brilliancy and beauty, you will do well to linger by the river, and within the precincts of the church, until its bell records with melodious clang the advent of the twenty-third. For then, 'tis said, you will hear such a burst of woodland song break out as nothing short of enchantment could call forth—the song of nightingales, of all the nightingales, it would seem, that have their nests in Warwickshire. Hitherto the chief harmony of the woods has been of a rougher sort. The cawing rooks, with their young families high up in the elms around the spire, have had it nearly all their own way, and though according well with the situation, and lending a rural accompaniment to the scene, their clamour has at times well-nigh deafened you. You may, indeed, have hailed their bedtime with satisfaction for the mere silence which it brought, but now that silence is broken without offence, especially when its meaning is interpreted by the fanciful legend still regarded lovingly by the good burghers of the town. They will tell you that the sweet-throated minstrels uplift their voices at this hour in salutation of the auspicious day it heralds. They are supposed to behold the poet's spirit, as once a year on the stroke of midnight it wanders forth from its sacred

resting-place and revisits the "glimpses of the moon." We mortals are, of course, too dull-eyed to see it, but the birds have a keener sense, and understand whose shade it is that passes. They know it as the master's, their friend—the essence of that divine mind, which compassed more, and spoke what it compassed better, than ever mortal did before, or since, or ever will, or can.

Here is a phase of sentiment for you, then, well fitted to crown and finish that which should be evoked by the material relics and records of the mighty poet. If in imagination you have enjoyed his presence as it wandered side by side with you through the haunts of his childhood, youth, and middle age, you may carry on the idea most fittingly through the agency of these kindly nightingales. The fact, as it is asserted, that they give no sign or note of their presence until they are aware of his, may be shadowy and vague—ridiculous to the cynic and his kind—but, if you are to visit Stratford to any purpose, you must carry with you all the faith your generous nature can muster. For, if you are not generous, genial, and credulous, willing to accept the unseen as likely to be as solid and certainly more permanent than the seen, you have little business in the town or neighbourhood at all. Should you, however, at any time find yourself there by accident, it is well that you should know how some folks value and regard the precious spot. If you take up your abode at the "Red Lion," and do the place in the ordinary way by merely looking at it, you will really enjoy yourself much better at many a worse inn. If you are there merely because you wish to say you have been, refrain from going. If you do not believe in Shakespeare, do not believe that he was born, lived, and died at Stratford-on-Avon, or that he wrote the plays attributed to him, there will be little interest for you in that old town itself. Without the interest attaching to it there is but little to see.

A ROMANCE OF THE IRISH HOUSE OF LORDS.

AN OLD STORY RETOLD.

Now that Parliament is likely to be occupied for some time with debates on Home Rule, the story of a famous trial, in which the Irish House of Lords appeared for the last time as judges of one of their order, may not be without interest. It is

another instance of the little regard for life or law displayed by that impetuous, high-handed, spendthrift, duelling race of Irish gentlemen whose recklessness and extravagance met such heavy retribution in the days when first the "Incumbered Estates Court Act" came into operation, when their mortgaged estates passed into other hands and their names vanished from the land.

Maurice, Earl of Kingston, was one of the members of the Irish House of Peers, and was by no means the least remarkable for those wild feats upon which gentlemen in these days prided themselves, and in which in later times the late Marquis of Waterford was so renowned an adept. He was a devoted believer in that doctrine afterwards publicly enunciated—and perhaps rendered sacred—by Grattan's dying advice to his son, "Be always ready with the pistol, Harry, be always ready with the pistol." He was to an extraordinary degree freehanded and lavish with his money; and the mortgages on his estates—which were wide and ample—piled themselves with singular rapidity.

After a time Earl Kingston found that the pace was becoming too fast, and that a fresh mine must be found or a tighter rein be drawn. The latter was not to be for a moment thought of; and, as fortune generally favours the brave, the former turned up—turned up in the presence of a young heiress in Kildare.

Caroline, daughter of Richard Fitzgerald, of Ophaly, was of the princely race of the Geraldines, who had come to Ireland in the conquering train of Henry the Second. The estates which had come into her possession by the death of an only brother were very large, and accordingly a match was made up between her and Viscount Kingsborough, Lord Kingston's eldest son; and in the year 1769 the marriage took place.

Lady Kingsborough's brother had left an illegitimate son, Gerald Fitzgerald, and him the kind-hearted lady had caused to be reared and educated as befitted the high race—on the father's side at any rate—from which he sprang. When he was of age a commission was purchased for him in the army; and as the young fellow was of handsome presence, good address, and undoubted courage, he rose speedily to the rank of Colonel. He finally wooed and won a lady of high rank; and his house near Richmond, on the banks of the Thames, was a centre at which the gayest and brightest of London society did not hesitate to meet.

To Lord and Lady Kingsborough were born, in course of time, a numerous family, and amongst the younger branches was a daughter, Lady Mary King—King being the family name. The education of this growing generation made it necessary for the family to leave their mansions in Cork and Kildare and betake themselves to London, outside of which they secured a suitable house and park. Unfortunately it lay in the direction of Richmond also, and was by consequence close to Colonel Fitzgerald's. Naturally the grown-up members were frequently to be found at their kinsman's, enjoying the pleasant and attractive society to be had there; and amongst those most frequent in attendance was Lady Mary.

She is described at this time as an exceedingly attractive girl, just verging on womanhood, with beautiful sparkling eyes, and a profusion of singularly long hair streaming down her back. Few could see her without being struck with her appearance. Unlike the rest of the family she was very quiet and staid—indeed, almost demure and religious—in her manner; and many marvelled how one of her retiring disposition could find pleasure in the gay and airy society of Glenville Hall. She seemed to do so, however, and in her quiet, unobtrusive way became not only a frequent but a constant visitor.

One fine summer morning in the year 1797 the young lady's maid entered her bedroom as usual, but only to find what was not usual—what, on the contrary, was surprising and startling—that the young lady was absent, and that her bed had not been lain on during the night. She had disappeared, apparently, some time after the others had retired to rest. A little searching discovered a note, carefully sealed with red sealing-wax, after the fashion of the time, lying in her desk. It intimated her intention of drowning herself in the Thames, whose waters rushed hard by.

Search was immediately made; family and servants rushed to the water's edge; the closest scrutiny was made everywhere. Their diligence was at length rewarded—if rewarded be the term to use under the circumstances—in the finding of the young lady's bonnet and shawl under a tree growing in a secluded place by the river-side. This gave ample corroboration to the statements made in the letter.

Why should she have done it? What was the impelling motive? These were the questions asked by the domestics,

whilst the family abandoned themselves to the wildest despair. Could it be disappointed love? No; the idea was absurd as applied to one of her quiet and staid manner. Sudden aberration of mind? No; that was equally out of the question. The family were perplexed beyond all telling. For some days the river was dragged in all directions for the body, but fruitlessly. It must have been swept towards the sea; though, considering the stagnant side-wash where her bonnet was found, that was unlikely.

By degrees, from the absence of motive and the non-discovery of the body, speculation took another direction. Could she have threatened suicide without having any intention of carrying it out? Had she any other motive? Enquiries were made in other directions, and not without result.

The young lady, without being positively beautiful, was fairly attractive; but, in particular, she was noted for the magnificence of her hair, which grew to extraordinary length and in great profusion. When the attention of all London had been excited by the mysterious disappearance of the young lady, a post-boy belonging to one of the large posting establishments turned up with a curious story. He had been engaged by a gentleman to drive a post-chaise out of London on the morning in question, and when some distance out of the city they had met a young lady walking alone. Her singular wealth of hair and aristocratic appearance attracted his attention. When they came up to her, the gentleman invited her into the carriage, and the post-boy was desired to return to the city. On arriving there both descended; the post-boy drove to the posting establishment alone, and there the matter for the time ended.

This statement drove conjecture in a new direction; it was now assumed that she had eloped with some one—though nobody could ever guess whom, for the young lady had been at all times of a peculiarly staid and unromantic disposition. Accordingly posters and advertisements were displayed on all the walls and in the newspapers of the city, and every friend of the family—and they were numerous, as one would naturally expect, from their great wealth and position—exerted himself to the utmost to find out her whereabouts.

One morning some weeks after, and

whilst the city was wonderfully excited over the matter, a girl, commonly dressed, called at the mansion and asked to see Lady Kingsborough. Introduced to that lady's presence, she had a story to tell. She was servant in a lodging-house in Clayton Street, Kensington, and thither some weeks previously, she said, a young lady answering to the description of Miss King, as given in the newspapers, had been brought. Even before any public attention had been drawn to the matter, she was attracted by the aristocratic appearance and beautiful hair of the visitor, and by the unusual fact of such a person appearing at such a place. The heavy reward offered had spurred her thoughts, and she had come to the belief that the visitor in question was the missing young lady.

While she was narrating her story to the afflicted lady, the door of the drawing-room opened, and Colonel Fitzgerald, still busy in his quest, walked in and began to make his usual enquiries as to whether any fresh information had been obtained. The servant's eyes glanced over him in perfect amazement.

"Why, my gracious!" said she at last; "this is the gentleman who brought the young lady to Clayton Street."

Lady Kingsborough's cries and exclamations brought a number of the family into the apartment. But in the confusion attendant on the circumstances, Colonel Fitzgerald withdrew, gained the hall-door, and fled. His depravity and treachery had been discovered; he could not bear the shame of the discovery; still less dare he face the overwhelming wrath of the family; and full of confusion and fear, he fled with all possible haste. At once the detectives were set on the new trail; the missing girl was discovered in a small cottage belonging to Colonel Fitzgerald, taken away, and sent to Ireland.

Colonel King—afterwards Lord Lorton—immediately challenged Fitzgerald. To do the unfortunate man justice he did not lack courage of this character, and promptly prepared to meet his challenger. Vengeful as Colonel King was, the wrong-doer seemed equally determined on blood. His character, however, had become so odious that he could find no officer or gentleman in London to act as his second. Under the circumstances he announced his determination to depend for the management of the affair on Colonel Wood—Colonel King's second. The surgeon in attendance at

the scene, appealed to, refused to act as his friend. It was on a Sunday morning, October the first, 1797, that the parties met behind the Magazine in Hyde Park. Four shots were fired in succession; but owing to, probably, the excitement of the parties, none took effect. The second interfered to try and effect an arrangement but neither would hear of it, and the duel continued. Two further shots were exchanged, again with no result; the ammunition of the parties was exhausted, and they separated with the intention of meeting again next morning. That day both combatants were arrested and locked up.

The place to which Miss King had been removed was Mitchelstown Castle, County Cork. It was a secluded place in the midst of dense woods, the "fairy Funcheon" flowing beneath its walls. Here she had plenty of time for regret and repentance. Unhappily, with her was sent to Ireland a maid in Colonel Fitzgerald's interest, who communicated to him the girl's place of detention. Thither the infatuated man followed her. He stayed at a small hamlet outside the demesne gates, remaining within all day and roaming through the park at night. In a small place conduct like this attracts attention, and word was brought to Lord Kingsborough, then at Fermoy on an inspection of the Cork yeomanry and militia. Suspecting that some emissary of Fitzgerald's was there, Lord Kingsborough drove at once to Mitchelstown Castle, and called at the inn where the stranger was stopping. There he learned that he had left earlier in the day for Kilworth, and on enquiring of the post-boy who had driven him, found that he had put up at the hotel there. From the description given of him, his lordship concluded that the hiding stranger was no other than Colonel Fitzgerald. He immediately ordered a chaise, and, informing his son of the particulars, drove with him to Kilworth with all possible speed.

Enquiring of the hotel-keeper whether such a person had arrived, his lordship was told he had, and was then in his bedroom. His lordship sent up his compliments, desiring to see him, but the bedroom door was locked, and the inmate, probably having seen their entrance to the hotel yard, gruffly answered that he should not be disturbed for the night. Lord Kingsborough and his son, hearing the voice recognised it; the latter, frantic with rage

and hate, rushed upstairs, threw himself bodily against the door, burst it in, and grappled with Fitzgerald just as he had snatched up a loaded pistol. The struggle was mad and furious for a moment or two, until Lord Kingsborough entered the apartment, and placing a pistol to Colonel Fitzgerald's head, shot him dead on the spot.

If the interest excited before was great, it now became intense! The two gentlemen were arrested and as speedily as might be brought to trial. True bills were found against them by the Grand Jury; but the family power and influence was too great in the country, and on the trial at the assizes held in April, 1798, the Hon. Robert King was acquitted by the jury empanelled to try him. The Lord Kingsborough having in the meantime succeeded to the title of the Earl of Kingston, claimed the privileges of his rank and demanded to be tried by his peers. The claim was necessarily conceded, and on the eighteenth of May, 1798, the trial came on in the House of Lords in the ancient Parliament of the Irish nation.

The Irish noblemen and gentlemen were always remarkable for their reckless magnificence, or, as others ungenerously put it, for extravagant spendthriftness, but on this occasion College Green showed more than usual splendour and stateliness. The great hall of the House of Lords was crowded. Two marquises, twenty-seven earls, fourteen viscounts, three archbishops, thirteen bishops, and fourteen barons assembled. An enormous number of spectators assembled to witness the trial.

The Lords adjourned their proceedings to the lower chamber of Parliament, the place appointed for the trial, as being more suitable than their own handsome but confined apartment. Their procession on that occasion was the last piece of pageantry which the Irish House of Peers exhibited. They marched, two by two, into the House of Commons; the masters in Chancery and the robed Judges of the Courts of Law preceding them. Immediately before the Lords walked in procession the minors of their order not entitled to vote and the eldest sons of the peers.

Then began the fantastic spectacle which the crowd had come to see. Reverences and salaams were duly made by Serjeants-at-Arms, clerks in Chancery, and clerks of the Queen's Bench. There were crossings to the right and left and reverences to his Grace, the Lord High Steward, on the

woolsack. The King's commission appointing the Earl of Clare president was read aloud, all the peers standing up uncovered; the writ of certiorari and the return to it was read; and then the clerk of the Crown directed the Serjeant-at-Arms to make proclamation to the Constable at Dublin Castle to bring his prisoner, Robert Earl of Kingston, to the bar.

"Oyez! oyez! oyez! Constable of Dublin Castle, bring forth Robert Earl of Kingston to the bar, pursuant to the order of the House of Lords. God save the King!"

Then, amid dead silence, that nobleman was ushered in by the Constable and Deputy-Constable of Dublin Castle, the latter of whom carried the axe, standing on the left hand of the prisoner, the edge turned towards him. The latter made a low reverence to the President, and to the Peers at either side of him. He then fell upon his knees at the bar. Upon being told to rise, he again bowed to Lord Clare and all the Peers, who with grave dignity returned the salutation.

Lord Clare from the woolsack addressed him after reading the charges:

"How say you, Robert Earl of Kingston—are you guilty or not guilty of this murder and felony for which you stand arraigned?"

The Earl replied:

"Not guilty."

"How will your lordship be tried?"

"By God and my Peers."

"God send you a good deliverance."

The Serjeant-at-Arms then made proclamation:

"Oyez! oyez! oyez! All manner of persons who will give evidence upon oath before our Sovereign Lord, the King, against Robert Earl of Kingston, the prisoner at the bar, let them come forth, and they shall be heard, for he now stands at the bar upon deliverance."

No witnesses, however, appeared. Either arrangements had been made with the widow and children of the slain man, or they were not sufficiently concerned over his death to interfere.

Then after some matters of form had been gone through, Lord Clare called over the Peers individually by name, beginning with the junior Baron, and asked:

"Is Robert Earl of Kingston guilty of the murder and felony whereof he stands indicted, or not guilty?"

Thereupon every Peer present, severally, standing up uncovered, answered, "Not

guilty, upon my honour," laying his hand on his heart.

Lord Clare summoned the prisoner to the bar again, and briefly informed him of his acquittal without a dissenting voice. Lord Kingston made three reverences to the Peers and retired.

The white staff was handed to the President, who, holding it in both his hands, broke it in two, and declared the commission dissolved. This spectacle of semi-barbaric pomp was the last, for two years after the Irish Parliament was abolished.

The cause of all the trouble lived obscurely in England, dying after a good old age. The Peerage is now extinct.

WITH THE SMUGGLERS.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

I DO not think any one will contradict me or accuse me of self-conceit when I say that I—Jules Bridoux—am one of the cleverest bee-keepers in the province of Luxembourg, not to say in the village of Vivy, where I now live. Every one knows that much about me, but I do not think that many know how I came to settle here, and to give up the trade of blacksmith to which I was brought up. I have not often told the story, but I do not know why I should not. It is not a bad story in its way, and may pass away half an hour for any one who cares to listen to it.

I am not a native of Vivy. The village in which I was born—Sugny—lies three leagues south from here, close to the French frontier of Belgium. It is a famous village in its way, though outwardly it is a poor little place enough. It contains perhaps six hundred souls, and the largest house is the Auberge Regnault. Opposite the inn is my father's forge, where I learnt my old trade. There was never a press of work in our smithy; sometimes several days would pass without the fire being lighted. We could not possibly have lived on my father's earnings as a blacksmith, even when the produce of his little plot of land on the hillside was added. My mother, like most of the other women of Sugny, kept a couple of cows, and carried her milk and butter regularly over the frontier to Sedan. That was not a very lucrative trade either. Her dairy profits did not go far towards feeding and clothing me and my five brothers and sisters.

Yet we were fed and clothed, and though money was not plentiful, I do not remember ever to have been exactly in want. The word of the enigma is not far to seek. If you had watched us children of Sugny playing when we came out of school you would soon have learnt it. You would have seen us form two bands, one of which would try to pass a given line with a concealed packet, while the others would try to capture them and take their treasure. It was a game of which we never tired. We called it playing at "fraudeurs," and "fraudeur," as no doubt you know, is just another word for smuggler.

That was how we began, girls and boys alike. Later on we played at the game in earnest. The girls took to carrying milk, and looked on the rigorous daily search at the douane as a mere trial of wits with the douaniers. Sometimes a little packet of tobacco or snuff or the like was brought to light in the hem of a dress or the crown of a bonnet; more often the hider was cleverer than the seeker, and the milk-woman added her few sous' worth of "fraude" to the hard-earned profits of her day. With the boys, when they had grown tall and strong, it was a more serious matter. The men of Sugny are "fraudeurs d'élite." They choose the darkest night, the least trodden path through the great borderland forest, run the gauntlet of a hundred dangers with consignments of contraband which would compromise the little all of those concerned, and then return triumphant—as a rule—in the grey dawn to divide the profits over a glass of *pequé* at the Auberge Regnault.

By the time I was four-and-twenty my apprenticeship as a "fraudeur" was over. I had taken to growing tobacco on my own account, and reckoned myself a match for half-a-dozen douaniers. I did not hesitate even to try and drive a bargain, single-handed, with Paul Pochet, which required more gumption than went to the outwitting of any number of douaniers.

Paul Pochet, the landlord of a rough little inn on the French side of the border, was the handiest and most dependable man to whom we of Sugny could dispose of our contraband goods. He was, indeed, our natural ally, being the cleverest receiver anywhere along the frontier. More than once prohibited goods had been traced to his very door; more than once the Café Pochet had been searched from its ill-slatted roof to the slimy corners of its damp

cellar. During the search Pochet would stand by, the picture of outraged innocence, protesting a little, but making no effort to arrest the searchers. Yet he always baffled them—till, at last, his cunning became the proverb alike of douanier and smuggler. He was, you see, the natural ally of us men of Sugny, notwithstanding the way he beat down our profits to the lowest possible figure. "How can I give you more?" he would say, when we protested. "I must make a profit too. Do I look like a rich man? What can a man do who has so many mouths to fill as I have?"

He had a large family, it is true, but it was not the bringing up of his children which kept him poor. We all knew how and where he squandered his ill-gotten gains, while Pauline, his eldest daughter, who had kept his house since her mother's death, slaved from morning till night to make half-francs go as far as whole ones.

Pauline was not a handsome girl. She did not resemble her ill-looking, bleary-eyed old father, but her life had been a hard one, and her good looks had been nipped in the bud by overwork, which is no beautifier of women. She was short and square-built, with irregular features and a pale face. She talked little, except to the children, and laughed still less. However, handsome is that handsome does, and as far as doing went, a better girl than Pauline Pochet never walked the earth. That is saying a good deal, but I mean it, and am prepared to stick by it. I do not know when I first began to find this out. If I try to recollect, the time seems to go further and further back, until it seems as if it had always been the wish of my heart to win her for my wife. But I said nothing to her or to any one of my growing love, for I knew that my parents would look sadly askance on the child of an evil-liver like Pochet for a daughter-in-law. Against her no one could breathe a word, but it would have seemed to my father and mother a shocking thing to enter into family ties with the landlord of the Café Pochet. So, though I made my visits as frequently as possible, I never hinted at the real object of them. No doubt the old man saw through it all, but he was cunning, and held his peace too.

At one time, even, he gave me a good deal of what I took to be encouragement; then suddenly he veered round and tried, as far as possible, to put obstacles in the way of my silent wooing.

I knew the reason of the change well

enough, for it took place just at the time when Léon Regnault began to be constantly in the bar of the Café Pochet.

Now Léon Regnault, the son of the Sugny inn-keeper, was a man far more like to take a girl's fancy than I was. He was a head taller than I, and far smarter-looking; and whereas I have always been one of the quiet sort, he had always a joke and a laugh ready. Moreover, his parents had saved money, and he would be one day the master of the inn, so that he was reckoned a capital match, and almost any father would have given him the encouragement he got from Pochet. To what Pauline thought I had no clue. As far as I could see, she treated Léon with the same reserve as she treated me; but then, of course, I did not see everything.

No doubt Léon's parents looked a good deal higher for a wife for their only son, but they had spoilt him from his cradle, and they had not the courage to go contrary to his wishes about Pauline.

"It's a sad pity," the père Regnault said once to my father, "a sad pity he's set his heart on the girl; but we must make the best of it, and anyhow, there will be the frontier between the girl and her father after the marriage."

"After the marriage!" I said, trying to look as if I was only interested for his sake. "You don't mean to say it's all settled?"

Regnault gave a knowing wink.

"Of course," he said. "Can you imagine old Pochet refusing such an offer?"

"And Pauline?" I said. Then I stopped, fearing I had betrayed myself.

But he was not thinking of me.

"Pauline!" he repeated. "Ah, well, she's as plain as she's poor, and she's not over-sharp, but she knows which side her bread is buttered."

By degrees the tale got about that, when old Pochet had found a suitable house-keeper, Léon Regnault would bring home his wife; yet, somehow, it always seemed to me as if the report was but the echo of his own fast and loose talking, and when I saw him look delighted at the chaff he got on the subject, and heard him hinting at the footing on which he and Pauline stood, I longed to hit him such a blow straight in his handsome face as should teach him to shield her name from gossip in the future. At last I made up my mind to try and find out from Pauline herself how the land really lay.

It was the end of September, and my tobacco crop was all cut and dried. This

gave me an excellent pretext for a visit to the Café Pochet, where I had not been for some time. When I reached the cross-road in the forest where the house stood, it was dusk. I walked in; the bar was empty. Pauline, in the kitchen, was getting the children's supper.

"Good evening, Pauline," I said.

"Good evening, Jules," she replied, going on with her work.

I sat down and tried to take the smallest child on my knee, but it screamed and struggled away.

"Silly little thing," said Pauline, as it ran and hid behind her, "that's how she is with strangers."

"Then she'll find it hard," I replied, "when a stranger takes your place."

"A stranger!" she exclaimed. "What do you mean? Who is to take my place?"

"Well," I said timidly, "I've heard you mean to leave home."

"And who have you heard that from?" she asked sharply.

"From Léon Regnault," I replied, "and by what he said it seemed he had the right to put the news about."

She was silent for a moment, then she said in her usual quiet way:

"He has no right to say any such thing. It is not true."

"I thought not," I replied. More than that I could not find courage to say; then, after a silence, I drew out my sample of tobacco. "I've brought this for your father," I began.

"Father's not here," she said. "I don't expect him to-night."

"Never mind," I went on, "you can tell him I've got about half a hundred-weight, and ask him to send over word about the price."

"No," she replied bluntly, "I won't. I'll have nothing to do with it."

"But, Pauline," I cried, "why ever not? I didn't mean to vex you. You see we've so often had disagreeables about prices, and it's best to make sure beforehand."

"I know all that," she replied. "That's not why I refuse. It's because I won't have anything to do with 'fraude.' I'm sick of it. Day after day, nothing but plotting, and bargaining, and squabbling, and cheating friend and foe, and then, when father is out, as he is to-night, getting a lot of contraband over—that is the worst of all. I am no coward, but oh, the horror of it—the long hours of waiting and listening for his signal, or for something worse, which must come some day!"

I had never heard Pauline make such a long speech before. My heart thrilled at the thought that she had spoken so freely, and with pity for the lonely watch she was about to keep. "Pauline," I said eagerly, "you need not watch alone; I will stay."

She shook her head. "No, thank you, Jules," she replied.

I did not venture to repeat the offer, for she had recovered her usual calm. Still I did not offer to go. She gave the children their meal. Presently she turned to me suddenly:

"Why do you mix yourself up with these dealings?" she asked.

"How could we all live," I asked in return, "if we did not follow the custom of Sugny?"

"And what about that great system of bee-keeping that some one told you about?" she said. "Weren't you going to make your fortune out of some grand patent hives? You talked a lot about it last year."

"I know I did; but I can't find time enough to attend to bee-keeping properly. Besides, it's a risky business."

"Not so risky as 'fraude'! Besides, it's a risk no honest man need be ashamed to run."

"But, Pauline," I pleaded, "I'm as honest as any man in Sugny."

"That's not saying much," she rejoined; "it's not the sort of recommendation I should expect in the man who comes courting me. Many a time, when I've sat watching for father, I've sworn to myself never to listen to a word of love from a man who's mixed up with smuggling."

Her words explained much that I had not before understood, though they sounded strange from the lips of Pochet's daughter. For a moment we looked into one another's eyes. Then I took my sample and returned it to my pocket. "I'll send it to Liège," I said.

"You'll do well," she rejoined simply.

Then I bade her good night, and walked home through the dark forest feeling as if the winning of Pauline had become quite a possible thing to me.

All the next day I went about in a kind of dream, my thoughts full of what had passed the night before. Why, I asked myself repeatedly, if Pauline had not some regard for me, had she spoken to me so frankly? Had she not as good as asked me to give up contraband dealing? If I gave it up for her sake, what then? I did

mean to give it up, and how should I prove my meaning to her? If it had not been the end of the summer, I should have straightway invested all my savings in bees and bee-hives; as it was, I could only make up my mind to do so the following spring. In the meantime I would read, and study, and learn all I could about apiculture. Before evening my hope had grown so big that I felt that I must see Pauline and get something to feed it on. The anxiety she had expressed about her father had seemed to me unfounded, still I made it the excuse to myself as I started once more across the forest, and as I went I thought of all I would say to her if by good luck I got the chance of a few minutes alone with her.

But when I reached the cross-roads I saw that something was amiss. A knot of men stood there talking eagerly, and some gendarmes were on guard at the café door.

"Have you heard the news?" cried one of the men to me.

"What news?" I asked.

"About Pochet. He was trapped last night; some one turned informer. He made a grand fight, but none the less the sly old fox is landed in Sedan gaol."

I went on; at the door the patrol examined me before I was allowed to enter.

Pauline came forward at the sound of my step; the tears were rolling down her pale cheeks.

"Pauline," I said hesitatingly, "I'm glad I happened to come this evening. I have heard outside. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing," she said hopelessly. "I can only sit still and wait for the worst."

"But," I began, "you must not lose courage; it is only his first conviction."

"That won't help him much," she replied. "You know that as well as I do."

"He was betrayed, I hear," I went on.

"Yes," she said; "a man of Chairières, whom he had worsted in a bargain, turned informer. They seized him at this very door. I saw it all, heard it all. Ah, it was dreadful! Just what I have always feared," she shuddered at the remembrance; "and what will become of him? I have asked the gendarmes. They say he will get what he deserves. What will that be, do you think?"

I could not tell her. I knew nothing of

French law. I knew there were fines and imprisonments, but of the exact details nothing whatever.

"He resisted, you know," she went on, "he fought hard. Two excisemen were badly hurt."

Yes, it sounded bad; there seemed no chance of his being let off lightly.

But as I ransacked my mind for a grain of comfort, an idea struck me.

"Pauline," I cried, "we must have a good defence for him on his trial."

"We could not afford it," she said sadly.

"But," I continued, "I'm thinking of Maître Letellier."

"Maître Letellier!" she repeated; "who is he?"

"He is the most eloquent pleader in Sedan," I explained, "and I have heard that he often pleads for nothing. He is a great Socialist, you know. He tried to get into the Chamber last year, and failed. Since then he loses no chance of airing his opinions. The president of the tribunal at Sedan admires him too. He is the very man to take up your father's cause, and he'll do it for nothing as it's against the Government."

Pauline started from her seat.

"Jules," she cried, "is that true?"

"Yes," I said, "I've heard it a dozen times."

"And will you go to Maître Letellier and ask him?"

"Yes," I replied, "I will go now."

"And when will you let me know?"

"On my way back," I said, "but it will be late. Remember, it is an hour's walk to Sedan."

"Never mind, I shall be watching for you. Ah, Jules, I am very grateful to you."

It was wonderful how light my heart was as I started on Pauline's errand. The ground seemed to fly under my feet. Within an hour I was waiting in Maître Letellier's bureau for him to return from the club where he was dining. When at last he came, he did not let me tell my story near so fully as I wished to.

"Yes, yes," he said, "I know the kind of case. It is scarcely such as I care to undertake. Still, as you are so urgent, I might, perhaps. You had better come and see me to-morrow at ten o'clock. I do not talk business out of business hours." Then he rose; our interview was evidently at an end. "One word more," he said, as I bade him good evening. "Am I to understand

that it is you who retain me for the defence?"

I stared at him in astonishment.

"I mean," he continued, "is it you who are making yourself responsible for my fee?"

At this question you might have knocked me down with a feather.

"Your fee, Monsieur l'Avocat!" I gasped.

He smiled.

"Yes, my fee," he said; "did you think prisoners were defended gratis?"

"But I had heard——" I began, then suddenly I seemed to recognise how vague those stories of his disinterestedness had been; besides, no doubt he did not class smuggling as a political offence. I changed my tone. "Yes, monsieur, certainly I am responsible for the fee."

"I shall not be hard on you," he said; "we will make it two hundred and fifty francs."

"Bien, Monsieur l'Avocat," I replied, and then, half dazed, I walked out into the street.

Two hundred and fifty francs! Where was that to come from? My savings amounted to one-third of the sum. The trial would come off soon, perhaps, and Pauline would have to be disappointed.

I was outside the fortifications by this time. I saw in the twilight the outline of an estaminet which I knew of old. I went in and called for a "petit verre," then for another. While I drank, the landlord sat and talked with me. When I came out my mind was so full of doubt and perplexity that I could not walk quickly. It was past ten o'clock when I knocked at the door of the Café Pochet.

"It's all right, Pauline," I said; "Maître Letellier undertakes the case."

She began to ask questions, but I hurried away, and she called out her thanks after me into the night.

"OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL

CHAPTER III.

THE wounded man, his breath coming in laboured, painful gasps, after that terrible run for his life, stared blankly at Hope. Then something like the ghost of a recognising smile crossed his lips. He even made a movement to raise his cap, but his hand dropped, he swayed un-

steadily to and fro, clutched at the bushes to save himself, then slipped, limp and helpless, to the ground.

"I've had an—accident," he murmured. "If you could help me——" He shut his eyes, leaning back heavily against the bushes.

Miss Hope Brown was almost terrified out of her senses. She thought for a moment that the man was dead; he looked so horribly still and ghastly in the moonlight.

Resisting another violent impulse to fly, she ran up to him and knelt down by his side.

"Oh, dear! What is to be done!" she cried involuntarily. She was vaguely conscious, in her distress and fear, that all girls would be expected to know exactly how to behave in such an emergency, and miserably sensible of her own ignorance and incapacity.

The little desperate cry perhaps reached him, for he opened his eyes and gazed straight into hers as she bent towards him.

She drew hastily back, flushing she scarcely knew why, unless it was that the man's eyes were so dark and so beautiful.

"Are you much hurt?" she exclaimed helplessly.

"Rather," he said. Then he raised himself. "Curse them!" he said, his eyes burning.

She shrank farther away, suddenly becoming conscious again of the fact that she was probably in the presence of one of those dreadful creatures—a poacher; also that she was giving him her assistance. But the man's white, blood-stained face confused her as to the simple ethics of the game-laws.

"I am so sorry," she exclaimed involuntarily, as he turned his head to look at her. The lurid burning of hate and anger in his eyes had softened suddenly into something more calculated to arouse a woman's pity.

"I'm bleeding to death, I think. No," as she said something about getting help, "don't call any one——" The faintness overcame him again.

As he drooped heavily towards her, she stretched out her arm and drew his head against her shoulder.

"I can't stir a step farther," he gasped, looking up into her eyes with fierce entreaty. "I'll have to call them. But you look good. I saw you before—to-night—up at the house. Go and tell Mrs. Page.

No one else—promise me!" straightening himself and seizing her hand. "Swear it. You look as if a man might trust you."

"I will tell Mrs. Page, and no one else," she said gently. "But you can't stay here alone," hastily, yet feeling how little use she could be to him. She could not have supported him many more minutes.

"If they find me here I can't help it. If they don't, and Mrs. Page comes in time, I'll pull through this too." And again the ghost of a smile crossed his white lips.

"She will be here in time," she said simply.

Since the moment she had drawn his head to her shoulder she had felt a kind of personal possession in the life she was assisting to save.

She ran off, never slackening her steps till she saw the lights of the house gleaming between the trees.

Then she stopped to collect her thoughts. The man plainly had his own reasons for not being seen by any one but Mrs. Page. By this time she had come to the conclusion that it was no ordinary poacher who was in so evil a strait. His voice, his appearance, in spite of the rough disguise of the working-man's clothes, had betrayed him. She wondered why he had sent her to Mrs. Page.

She divined that most of the servants would be in the front of the house in the supper and refreshment rooms, or looking on at the dancing from the gallery.

There was a side door leading into a wing that had not been thrown open to-night. One set of rooms in it was set apart for Gilbert Egerton's use. Another set was always kept locked.

Hope, thinking of the side entrance, hurried cautiously round to it, avoiding the light flung on to the terrace and drive in the front of the house from the brilliantly illuminated windows.

She heard the sounds of waltz music as they floated out from the house, the voices and laughter of some of the guests as they wandered up and down the terrace outside.

It was all in such strange contrast to the scene from which she had come that it impressed itself on her memory to the end of her life. She shivered a little under the excitement. Though she did not know it, from that moment she passed from the careless, unthinking ignorance of girlhood into the fuller knowledge of the

woman, and she felt the tears that haunt even the merriest of human laughter. Not that she was conscious of moralising. Her chief thought was to find Mrs. Page. Only afterwards she remembered that strange chill depression which touched her as she brought the message of the wounded man into the house. She entered by the side door, which luckily had not been closed, and found herself inside a long and rather narrow passage.

As she stood hesitating, the door of a room, used by Gilbert Egerton as his study, opened suddenly, and the very person she wanted came out—Mrs. Page, the housekeeper at Meadowlands.

As the woman's eyes fell on her she turned as white as a sheet.

"Good heart alive, miss!" she gasped, hurrying up to her; "whatever is the matter?"

Hope glanced down instinctively as the woman pointed at her, and a shuddering exclamation broke from her too.

Her ball-dress, her gloves were stained with the wounded man's blood. In her excitement she had not noticed it.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "there is a poor man who has been dreadfully hurt. He is by the old summer-house, in the wilderness. He's bleeding to death, I am afraid, and he asked me to come for you."

"For me!" The startled alarm on the housekeeper's face was indescribable. "Good Heaven!" under her breath. "It wouldn't be—— What is he like, miss?"

"Oh, he isn't a poacher, I'm sure—not a common one, at any rate. He has dark eyes——"

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed the good lady again. "Lord!" to herself, "it's him, sure enough, or she wouldn't have mentioned his eyes first thing."

The girl was beginning to notice the dismay and amazement her tale had roused. There was something more in it than the mere shocked surprise of an ugly accident.

"What is it?" she asked breathlessly. "He said I was not to tell any one but you. Oh! if you know him, make haste; he may be dying. Ah!"

She drew back a step, frightened and conscience-stricken.

She had not noticed that the housekeeper had left the door of the room ajar. It now opened wide, and Gilbert Egerton stepped out into the passage. He must have heard everything. She had never

dreamed for an instant that he would have been in this deserted part of the house at this hour instead of being in the ball-room.

"Will you tell me, Miss Brown, how you—met this man?" he asked in a stern voice, which she scarcely recognised.

His face was white and set. Even in her dismay she was conscious of the indescribable change which had transformed the dandy she had despised an hour ago into this merciless-eyed young man.

"I had walked as far as the old summer-house. Mrs. Page," turning instinctively to her from the cruel setness of that look in the young man's face, "you will go!" And overstrung and exhausted with her long run, the pleading tears sprang into her eyes.

"Of course I will," said Mrs. Page. "There!" she said afterwards to her mistress. "If I hadn't have gone for his sake I would have gone for hers. She looked sweet enough to be his guardian angel pleading for him." Mrs. Page was romantic, but her romance sprang from the most womanly and tender of hearts. "I'll get some brandy, Mr. Gilbert——"

But her young master was already on his way to the door.

"No! He mustn't go! He looks so dreadfully angry!" exclaimed Hope. "It may have been wrong; but I promised——"

"It's all right, deary," said the house-keeper in motherly soothing, though there was something anxious and troubled in her own face as she glanced after Gilbert Egerton as he left the house. "He can be trusted, though——" She stopped short. "Now, miss," she said, coaxingly, "will you do something else for the poor young gentleman hurt down there? You've done more than you know as it is, and they'll never be able to thank you enough. Just slip away to your room without any one seeing you, and for Heaven's sake, miss, don't tell any one what has happened. There, miss," pushing her gently down the corridor, "for the Lord's sake go, and let me get away too, to see."

It seemed as if she, too, felt that it was best not to let Gilbert Egerton meet the helpless man alone.

Impressed by her entreating earnestness, Hope obeyed, and succeeded in reaching her room unseen.

"Who can it be?" she exclaimed to herself. "I have never seen eyes like that

before. Oh, how silly I am! Poor Mrs. Egerton!"

And she sank down into one of the chairs, appalled at the magnitude of the sorrow which seemed suddenly to darken over the life of the woman who had been so good to her.

The recollection of an outcast first-born son—the idol of his mother's heart—came back to her.

Was this, then, Wilfred Egerton? The man against whom every hand was raised? The son who had been forbidden his father's house? The fugitive from justice, upon whom rested so black a suspicion?

CHAPTER IV.

TOWARDS the close of the ball a rumour spread through the room that there had been a serious poaching affray, and that the head gamekeeper and one of the poachers had been badly wounded. The poacher, however, had so far made good his escape. Gilbert Egerton's absence, which had been noticed, was explained by the fact that he had been called away to see into the matter. Neither his father nor mother knew that the affray had been so serious till he returned to the ball-room about two o'clock. He had given orders, on leaving the house, that nothing was to be said to them about it.

Hope, who had changed her dress and returned to the ball-room, happened to be standing talking to Mr. Egerton when Mr. Gilbert Egerton, a little pale perhaps, but languid and self-complacent as usual, sauntered into the room. He gave his father a short account of the skirmish, and the search that had followed.

"And to think that they've let that scoundrel Molloy slip through their fingers again!" said his father angrily. "If poor Eason dies, he shall be hanged, if I hunt him down myself."

"Yes," said his son laconically, twirling out the points of his moustache.

But Hope, glancing nervously at him, caught his eyes, and she was again frightened by their cruel sternness. A thought flashed into her brain from the ugliness of which her charity recoiled, yet it clung to her for the rest of the evening.

The man who would alone benefit by Wilfred Egerton's disgrace and death was Gilbert—the second son.

"I wish you had let me know, Gilbert," said his father, testily. "I know those scoundrels' ways better than you. What time did you get the message?"

"I didn't think there was any need of disturbing you, sir," said the young man quietly. "It was just upon one, I think, when Ford got here."

His father, inveighing bitterly against the iniquities of the scoundrels who defied the divine rights of land-owners and game-preservers, went off to talk the matter over with a fellow-magistrate.

Hope's face had paled as there fell on her the full sense of the tragedy underlying the indignation of the unconscious upholder of the game laws, thinking only of his wounded gamekeeper and the escape of the snarer of his pheasants—throbbing through the flowers, and lights, and music of the ball-room scene about her—dogging the steps of the handsome, stately woman moving at that moment towards them, the smile with which she had been talking to one of her guests still lingering on her beautiful mouth. She turned restlessly to the young man standing by her side, still toying with the moustache of which he was so vain. She wanted to ask if that other man were safe. But the memory of the look she had surprised in his eyes when his father, in his terrible unconsciousness, had threatened to hunt down and hang the murderer, should Eason die, checked her.

"I hate the game-laws!" she said instead.

"Do you?" He turned and looked at her with an appearance of mild astonishment. "Do not let my father, or any man above middle-age here, hear you. They look upon them as the chief factor in the country salvation. Only the constitutional mind is capable of preserving pheasants."

He would still speak frivolously.

She turned away from him towards the unconscious woman coming towards them in stately ease.

Perhaps he even found the meeting with his mother a little too trying for his callous self-control. He had followed her glance.

"I suppose I ought to go and make peace with my partners," he said coolly. "Here is one of yours coming to look for you, I think," moving away as another young man came eagerly up to her.

She was very glad to be carried off before Mrs. Egerton reached her.

That gracious lady gave her a kindly little smile as she was whirled past her into the dance. She was delighted at the girl's success.

Hope was not able to answer immediately an amusing remark made to her at

that moment by her partner, for something seemed to rise in her throat and choke the laughing reply. It suddenly struck her how very sad Mrs. Egerton's mouth always was beneath its smiles.

The ball came to an end, and Hope was actually glad when the night's pleasure was over.

The guests had all driven away, the last of the visitors forming the house-party had retired to his or her room, and sleep and silence reigned through the house. But Gilbert Egerton still sat up waiting. It was nearly five. Outside it was already light, and the sun's rays were growing hot enough to drink up the dew on flower-beds and lawns. Not a leaf stirred. There was only the twitter of the birds as they rejoiced in the sunshine of the new day.

Gilbert Egerton, coming into the smoking-room, in which lingered the fumes of the late cigars, flung open the shutters and windows to let in the sweet air. He was still wearing the smoking jacket he had donned last night to join the other men in the smoking-room. His face was pale and haggard, full of a fierce disgust. He dropped down on the window-sill, leaning heavily against the framework. Something faint, sickly-sweet, oppressed him, tainting even, it seemed to him, the fresh sweetness of the summer morning.

He glanced down at the floor of the room; a buttonhole of stephanotis, dropped by one of the men the previous night, bruised and yellow, lay there. He picked it up with an expression of loathing, and flung it far out of the window.

It had been a favourite buttonhole of his outcast brother.

He sat there, his hands thrust in his pockets, staring out before him.

There was a beautiful bit of flower-gardening to be seen from the window. The grounds of Meadowlands were celebrated in the county. This morning, in the early summer hours, the sweep of velvet turf, the magnificent old trees, the cunning masses of flower colour, made a picture beautiful enough to tempt the soul of a better man than Gilbert Egerton. But the property was strictly entailed on the eldest son.

Gilbert Egerton was thinking of that eldest son now.

Then suddenly the early summer-morning stillness was broken. The young man started, his face paling in the shock of the moment with a different feeling. He leant forward to listen.

The sound grew more distinct.

It was that of distant but rapidly approaching wheels. It was an ordinary enough sound, but to him it bore a sinister meaning. He started to his feet, noiselessly and quickly closed the window and shutters, and left the smoking-room.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE later, before even the servants were yet stirring, sleeping late after the ball of the previous evening, four men noiselessly took up their positions about the house in a manner to guard and overlook every possible mode of egress.

When everything was arranged to his full satisfaction the chief of the party rang at the hall-door.

He could hear the bells clanging through the sleeping stillness of the great house, and cool-headed and accustomed to such work as he was, the man did not half like the sound himself.

He had a very unpleasant task before him. But it all came in the course of a day's duty, and besides that, he was young and ambitious, and this particular duty successfully carried out would mean personal advantage and promotion.

There was a pause as the echoes of the bell died away. Some of the servants, awakened out of their sleep, began hastily to dress themselves. But before the young man could ring again the hall-door was unbarred and Gilbert Egerton, apparently on his way for a swim in the river, appeared.

"Dornton!" he exclaimed. For a moment, as he looked straight into the other man's eyes, it seemed as if his first impulse was to bar the entrance to him.

"It's for that," said the detective quietly. "The house is watched on all sides. I know he is here. I must see Mr. Egerton. I promise you this, that anything I can do to spare the family I will."

A slight but inexpressibly bitter smile crossed the young guardsman's pale lips.

The other man glanced away for a second.

"I will go and tell my father," said Gilbert Egerton, drawing back into the hall. It was a tacit admission that opposition was powerless, and the detective, with a warrant for the arrest of Wilfred Egerton, the heir to one of the oldest and wealthiest estates in the county, crossed the threshold of his father's house.

"I'm not sure that I should have had the pluck to do it," thought the detective, who knew how, till this man had disgraced it,

the honour of the family had been stainless. "Only I'm certain he's here. If only that maundering idiot hadn't disobeyed orders and let him slip, we should have nailed him by this."

It was a relief to his feelings to be able to vent his wrath on his subordinate, who, through an unpardonable act of disobedience and folly, had lost the track of the fugitive. Besides, the possibility of his being wrong after his present high-handed proceeding was anything but pleasant to face. His chiefs would not forgive such a blunder.

"But he is here," said Dornton again, proceeding to mount the broad staircase after Gilbert Egerton. He ought to have followed him at once. But he had intentionally spared the father and son. Besides, he knew the stuff of which the father was made. Curiously enough, he suddenly found himself no longer so sure of the son.

"A year ago he would have given him up as uncompromisingly as Mr. Egerton himself," he thought, regretting bitterly the momentary impulse of mercy. "But there's a difference in him. He was hardly surprised, I think."

But as he hurried across the gallery at the head of the staircase in the direction that Gilbert Egerton had taken, he saw father and son coming out of one of the rooms. Mr. Egerton's face was flushed red with anger. His eyes blazed.

"What do you mean," he asked, his voice hoarse with indignation, "by coming to search for—that man here? He would not dare take shelter here. He knows that I would hand him straight over to the police, though he is my own flesh and blood."

"Oh, father!"

They all turned to the doorway. Mrs. Egerton had flung on a dressing-gown, and stood there, her white feet bare, her hair—which had turned gray so long before its time—tumbling in rough confusion about her. But she was unconscious of everything but the terrible news which had burst so suddenly upon her.

Her husband's lip twitched, as if that agonised appeal to his fatherhood had touched him. But with a stern gesture he motioned her away.

"Take your mother into her room," he said harshly to his son.

The young man sprang forward, only just in time, for his mother swayed to and fro, and fell heavily into his arms. He lifted her tenderly back into the room.

"My God!" muttered Mr. Egerton, "it will kill her!"

But he turned back to the detective, who, with impassive face, looked on silently at the domestic tragedy. Perhaps his calm stillness braced up the shaken nerves of Mr. Egerton.

"You can search the house from attic to cellar," he said, with bitter harshness. "That scoundrel is not here!" He heard the servants moving in the hall below. "You can give your orders; I will see they are obeyed. I will only ask you to spare—his mother as much as you can."

"Thank you, sir."

It was perhaps a hardly necessary courtesy; but it was Dornton's homage to the honour and integrity of the man whose life was in no way blackened by the sins and dishonour of his son.

"There was a poaching affair last night," he said, after a few questions, which Mr. Egerton answered with a simple directness the truth of which could not be doubted for a moment.

"Yes." He turned livid as a thought struck him. "Gilbert!" as that young man came out at the same moment from his mother's room.

"Eason swears it was Ned Molloy." Gilbert spoke quietly. "He could not be mistaken. He knows him too well."

"Thank Heaven!" said his father, the horror lifting from his face. "You wouldn't deceive me, I know, Gilbert. Go and see what you can do for Dornton. If I am not wanted, I will go back to your mother."

But it struck the keen eyes of the detective as they moved away that the quietness of the young man's face was that of intense self-repression.

He was certain now that he would get no assistance from him.

Before another hour had gone by, every soul in the house, from guest to servant, knew that Meadowlands was under the supervision of the police, and that the place was being searched for Wilfred Egerton, whose name three months ago had been in every one's mouth as that of a possible thief and murderer. Opinions were divided on the matter. While some believed with the broken-hearted mother in his innocence, the greater part shared his father's belief in his guilt.

As soon as they could arrange for their departure, the guests, full of pity for their unfortunate host and hostess, left the house. By luncheon-time only Hope

remained. Mr. Egerton, thinking her presence might comfort his wife a little, had asked her to stay. She was only too glad to do what she could to help them. She had done her best to replace Mrs. Egerton, who had been unable to leave her room or see any one; looking after the departing guests, directing as well as she could the servants, most of whom, after their kind, had completely lost their heads. It was a dreadful morning. The very atmosphere seemed charged with the intense excitement of the curiosity and fear that prevailed.

But it wore slowly away, and not a sign did the police discover of Wilfred Egerton's hiding-place.

The house had been searched from attic to basement. Not a corner had been overlooked. The secret staircase, and chamber called the "Priest's Room," had been shown to the police by Mr. Egerton himself. The servants had been skilfully questioned, but their complete ignorance on the matter was apparent enough to the astute detective.

Outside in the grounds the watch and search had been as careful and as futile.

Hope came across the detective once or twice in the course of the morning. It seemed to her that he was everywhere. She wondered how Mr. Egerton could endure his presence in the house; why he did not order him off the premises. She was terrified at and hated him, with righteous anger and contempt. To her he represented the embodiment of ruthless, stealthy cunning and spying. She was intensely thankful that he asked her no questions. She was longing to hear what had been the end of that scene, in which she had played so slight a part the previous night. But she had not dared ask questions, and once when she felt those quiet, unfathomable eyes of the young detective resting on her face, she was thankful that she knew no more than she did.

Happily for them all, her own maid had had to go away the previous evening, called home by a sudden case of illness in her family. She had left Meadowlands after helping her mistress to dress for the ball, and so as yet no one had seen or heard anything of the blood-stained ball-dress. It would have been impossible to have hidden it from her maid—and then who knows whether she could have kept the secret, and what suspicions it might have raised in the detective's mind? She

trusted that none of the servants had noticed her change of dress in the evening, or that no one would chance to mention it.

"Oh, I'm so glad they have all gone!" she exclaimed, as she and Gilbert Egerton turned back into the house after seeing the last of the guests drive off.

"It is very kind of you to take so much interest in our affairs!" he said languidly.

The young man had irritated her more and more as the morning wore on. He had shown such a complete lack of appreciation of the dread and disgrace of the situation.

The slight smile on his face goaded her now past endurance.

By it she discovered that the daughter of the "oil and colourman" had been identifying herself with his family. At least, so she read the smile. Her face flamed. She could have bitten her tongue through for the luckless exclamation.

"I'm glad, too!" he went on. "It's an awful bore to have the house crammed with people you don't care about?"

"Isn't that rather ungracious, considering that they were invited here for your special benefit?" she said, the greatest disdain in the uplifting of her pretty head.

He looked at her mildly, as if he had no belief in the wish of any one to treat him with scorn.

"I'm not sure that they were invited here only for my benefit," he said. "My mother, you see, had a lot of dinners and parties to return, and I am sure she did it as much for you as for me. I'm quite willing to share the honours with you, if you will let me," indolently.

Hope had heard how sternly and persistently for years Mr. Egerton had ignored his eldest son's existence. He had lived and acted and forced his wife to do the same, as if he had never belonged to him. Even since the last disgraceful affair in which he had been mixed up his father had continued his usual course of action, and they had given the ball last night in honour of this, their other son, as though their first-born were not living, an outcast from society.

It was unjust. But she mentally accused Gilbert Egerton of being the chief cause of the apparent heartlessness.

"If I had been you I would have done all in the world not to have had that ball last night!" she flashed out at him. "I don't know how you could do it."

He opened his blue-grey eyes in real or affected amazement.

"I really see no reason," he began, then broke off abruptly.

Mrs. Page was coming across the hall to them; she had been with her mistress nearly all the morning. Hope had not seen Mrs. Egerton yet, and she hurried forward to enquire.

"If you please, miss, Mrs. Egerton is feeling a little better," said Mrs. Page, "and would you go and see her after luncheon?"

"I shall be very glad," began Hope eagerly, and then turned quickly round.

A faint exclamation, which she could hardly credit, seemed to have broken from the indolent dandy's lips. But he had turned on his heel and was walking away.

"I shall be only too pleased to come!" she said. "Please give her my dearest love, and tell her so!"

But Mrs. Page shook her head, too, a little as she went back to give the message to her mistress.

"The Lord grant no mischief will come of it! But he is very hard on his brother, is Mr. Gilbert, and she thinks nothing but of Mr. Wilfred!"

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

A BITTER east wind, which was taking sufficiently depressing effect upon all London, was dealing with peculiar grimness with Redburn Street, Camden Town. The neat little houses in that dreary gray dryness looked sordidly wretched; there was something deserted and hopeless about them. No one was to be seen, except that at a first-floor window about half-way down a woman's figure was standing, and as Dennis Falconer turned into the street his footsteps rang with heavy distinctness on the glaring pavement. He strode slowly and steadily along, and his solitary figure, as it stood out with that peculiar sharpness of outline which is a characteristic production of east wind, harmonised absolutely with the sombreness of the background. His face was full of sombre purpose, grave and stern.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday—two days after Julian's return home. On the morning of the preceding day Julian and his mother had had a second interview, which had ended in his giving a sullen and reluctant assent to her demands; and in the evening Dennis Falconer had received from Mrs. Romaine a brief, almost peremptory note, begging him to come to her. He had gone to Queen Anne Street accordingly, severely unsympathetic, but also severely reliable, early on Wednesday morning.

He had found Mrs. Romaine in a feverish agony of agitation beyond even

the power of her will to conceal or wholly to control. Her voice, painfully thin and sharp; her gestures restless, nervous, irritable; her utterance hard and rapid; had all testified to a strained, tense excitement before which all her artificiality was utterly submerged, and in which Falconer himself was obviously regarded by her solely as the one instrument at hand to her necessity. Her whole soul seemed to be set upon the immediate termination of "the affair," as she called it. It affected her evidently in only one way, she looked at it from only one point of view: as something to be finished up, put away, buried out of sight. It was the thought of delay in doing this, only, that appeared to torture her; of the affair itself with all its terrible significance, its inevitable consequences, she had, as far as Falconer could divine, no adequate conception. The girl must be bought off; must be sent away; must be sent right out of the country in case—and here came the one agonised sense of a possible consequence which Falconer could detect—in case Julian should marry her after all!

It was evidently the haunting terror of such a contingency which had driven her to send for Falconer. It was obvious, though she seemed to be striving hard to conceal it even from herself, that she could not trust her son; that she could find no rest in the promise she had wrung from him. What she had to say to Falconer was, in effect, that some one else must see the girl; the arrangement to be surely effected must be brought about by a third person who would set about the business promptly and act decidedly. It was this service which she wanted of Falconer, and Falconer, after a moment's grave self-communing, agreed to render it. He

was as far removed from sympathy with her in this her hard, agonised reality as he had been from the artificial woman of the previous months, or from the real woman of eighteen years before. He considered her point of view in the present instance absolutely revolting in her. But no man could question the practical sense of what she said, or the advisability of the course she proposed, and his conception of his obligations as her sole male relative and trustee was too intimately intertwined with his sense of duty and self-respect to allow him to entertain, even for a moment, the possibility of refusing to act for her. He had stood by her side, impelled by that sense of duty, gravely reliable, and unsympathetic, eighteen years before. The irony of fate decreed that it was for him, and for him only, to act for her now. To him it was simply the stern dictate of moral necessity to be obeyed as such. Accordingly he had received her instructions, offering now and again a grim, practical suggestion, with a stern air of business-like reserve; had undertaken—being at the bottom of her opinion as to the desirability of instant measures—to see “the girl” that same afternoon; and he was walking down Redburn Street now in the pitiless east wind to carry that undertaking into effect.

He reached the house, knocked, and asked briefly for Mrs. Roden. The landlady, whose sentiments towards her lodgers had developed rapidly in consequence of the enquiries which Falconer had felt it his duty to make, received his words with a sniff expressive of contempt; and then informed him, with a stare of insolent curiosity, that “she” was “hupstairs,” and led the way thither; evidently urged to that act of civility solely by a hope of finding out something. She was a coarse, vulgar-looking woman, with small red eyes, which glittered expectantly as she flung the door open and announced, in a loud and denunciatory voice, “’Ere’s a gentleman!”

But if she had hoped for startling revelations she was disappointed. Dennis Falconer advanced into the room with stern composure; the figure in the window turned quickly but quietly to meet him; and Mrs. Jackson was obliged to shut the door upon the two.

Clemence was looking very pale. The vague shadow which had fallen upon her as she journeyed up to London two days before had deepened into a wistful, questioning sadness. She had not seen

Julian since she parted from him at Victoria Station. On the previous day she had received a note from him which told her that “work” kept him from her for that day, but that he would come as soon as he was able. There was nothing to distress or alarm her in the fact itself; more than once before a similar disappointment had come to her, and even though the second day brought her no letter, the blank merely meant, as she assured herself hour by hour, that she would see him before the day was done. But strive against it as she might, and did, she had spent the past twenty-four hours weighed down by a sense of trouble utterly undefined; utterly, as it seemed to her, without reason. She had borne her burden with mute patience, reproaching herself as for ingratitude and an inordinate desire for active happiness, and struggling bravely to conquer it; but neither arguing about it nor denying it as a less simple and straightforward nature would have done. And now the appearance of Falconer seemed suddenly to focus and define her vague distress. The sudden conviction that Julian was ill, and that this gentleman had come from him to tell her so, held her still and silent in a pang of cruel realisation and anticipation.

The light, as she moved, had fallen full upon her face, and as he saw it a certain shock passed through Dennis Falconer. He had seen her figure, and even her face in the distance more than once, but he had never before seen it with any distinctness, and for the first instant the simplicity and purity of its beauty, with the expression deepened by the strange shadow through which the past two days had led her, clashed almost painfully with that idea of “the girl” which had grown, during his conversation with Mrs. Romayne, into a kind of fact for him. The next moment, however, he had reconciled appearances and realities, as he conceived them, with the grim reflection that there is no vice so vicious as that which wears an innocent face; and in doing so had quenched what might have been perception beneath a weight of narrow truism.

No greeting of any kind passed between them. All Clemence’s faculties were absorbed in her dread. Falconer was busied with that process of reconciliation. The strange little silence was broken eventually by Falconer, and he spoke with the unbending sternness and distance which that process and its conclusion had naturally accentuated.

"I am here as the representative of Julian Roden's nearest relative and guardian," he said. It had been arranged between himself and Mrs. Romaine, on the suggestion of the latter, that "the girl," if she did not already know it, should be kept in ignorance of Julian's real name.

The statement was slightly over-coloured, since Julian was of age, and his mother was no longer his guardian in any legal sense; but to stern moralists of Falconer's type, to whom the pretty little falsenesses of life are wholly to be condemned, a slight misstatement in such a case is frequently permissible. The brief, uncompromising words had seemed to him to set the key of the interview beyond mistake. He was consequently slightly taken aback by their effect.

Every trace of colour died out of Clemence's face, and two great dilated eyes gazed at him for an instant in dumb agony before she whispered:

"He's not—dead?"

Falconer made a slight, almost contemptuous, negative gesture. He had no intention of being imposed upon, by theatrical arts, and as Clemence, her self-control shattered by the sudden relief, turned instinctively away, and pressed her face down on the arm with which she had caught at the curtain for support, he went on with immovable sternness:

"My business has to do with his life, not his death. The main point is very simple, and I will put it to you at once. Absolute ruin lies before him. Is he or is he not to embrace it?"

He saw her start, and she lifted her face quickly, and turned it to him all quivering and unstrung from her recent suffering, and quite white.

"He is in trouble!" she cried, low and breathlessly. "Oh, what is it? What has happened?"

Dennis Falconer's patience was approaching its limits, and he spoke curtly and conclusively.

"I think we may dispense with this kind of thing," he said. "It can serve no purpose, as everything is known. I come now from his mother with full power to act for her——"

He was interrupted. A burning colour, the colour of such paralysing surprise as can take in hardly the bare statement, much less the consequent developments and inferences, had rushed suddenly over Clemence's face, dyeing her very throat.

"His mother!" she exclaimed. "His mother!" Her tone dropped as she repeated the words into a strange, uncertain murmur, in which incredulity, acceptance—as a kind of experiment—and something that was almost fear, were inextricably blended.

The fear alone caught Falconer's ear. His lips were parted to resume his speech with grim decisiveness in the conviction that she understood at last that nothing was to be gained by trifling with him, when she said, as though he had had nothing to do with her previous words:

"Go on, please."

He looked at her again, and was struck by a new look in her face, as he had been struck by a new tone in her voice. She was evidently going to drop all theatricalities, he told himself.

"Perhaps you were not aware that he is, practically, under the control of his mother," he said. "That is to say, he is dependent on her for every penny he spends. It is quite out of the question that he should make money at the bar—by his own profession, that is to say—for two or three years at least. Consequently the cutting off of the allowance made him by Mrs.—Roden will mean for him absolute penury."

She was staring at him; staring at him out of two wide, intense brown eyes; with such a helpless bewilderment in her face that she seemed to be quite dazed. She put her hand to her head as he paused with a feeble, uncertain gesture; but she did not speak, and Falconer went on severely:

"I conclude that he has not represented these facts to you as they stand. They are facts, nevertheless. You will, therefore, understand that, his allowance withdrawn, he will be entirely without the means of supporting you. You may possibly consider that some shifty means might be found which, by putting him in possession of small sums of money, would enable him for a time to defy his mother. Let me point out to you something of what such a course would involve. Julian Roden is a young man with a good position in society—I mean he is accustomed to be made much of by men and women who are his equals; he has chances and opportunities of which he intends, no doubt, to avail himself. All this, in taking such a step, he would throw away for ever. Social intercourse, future career, would go with his income at

his mother's word. Now, I will ask you only how long you could hope to depend on him in such circumstances; how long it would be before his only feeling for the woman whom he had allowed to drag him down and to destroy all his hopes in life would degenerate into sheer repugnance; and for how long he would care to keep her?"

He paused, and after a moment's dead silence Clemence spoke in a weak, eager, almost desperate voice:

"There must be some mistake! It—it can't be—the same!"

The words seemed to Falconer a mere miserable subterfuge, and he answered very sternly:

"There is not the faintest possibility of mistake. Julian Roden has owned the whole affair to his mother, who taxed him with it on her discovery——"

"Oh, wait a minute! Wait a minute!"

There was a ring of such intolerable pain, such shame and anguish, in the voice, that Falconer's attention, heavy and pre-judiced as it was, was arrested by it. Dimly and uncertainly, and for the first time, the girl before him appeared to him not simply as a representative of a degraded sisterhood, but as a woman. He looked at her for a moment, as she stood with her face buried in her hands, quivering from head to foot, with a severe kind of pity.

"I will tell you, as briefly as may be, what I am charged to say," he said gravely, but not ungently. "Mrs.—— Roden is determined to break off her son's disgraceful connection with you at the cost of any suffering to herself or to him. She is willing to believe that her son is to be considered in some sort as the more guilty party of the two in having acted as the tempter, and she has no wish to deal otherwise than generously by you. But there are conditions."

He paused again. Over the slender, bowed woman's figure before him there had gradually crept, as he spoke, a stillness like the stillness of death; and now, as he waited for her to speak, Clemence slowly lifted her head and looked at him; looked at him with dull, sunken eyes, which seemed the only living points in a face out of which all life and expression seemed to have been crushed by a rigid, haggard mask.

"Conditions?" she repeated.

Her voice was hollow, and had a mono-

tonous, far-away sound, and the word seemed to have no meaning for her.

A sense of vague discomfort took possession of Dennis Falconer. A dim sense that he was not being met as he had expected—as he had a right to expect—disturbed and annoyed him. He had no idea that what he was chiefly discomposed by was a hazy consciousness that a touch of unconscionable respect for the woman who, as he believed, was utterly unworthy of respect, was mingling with his already sufficiently unorthodox sense of pity; but he entrenched himself in a triple armour of stiffness.

"The conditions are these," he said. "You will give your written word, as under penalties for having obtained money by false pretences, to leave England on a given date and by a given route, and not to return to England within the next ten years. Mrs.——Roden in return will pay you the sum of five hundred pounds. If you refuse these terms, and Roden submits to his mother, you will simply be the poorer by five hundred pounds. If you induce him to defy his mother, the consequences I have already described to you will inevitably ensue."

He waited for her answer, steadily fortifying himself against being surprised at anything she might say; but no answer came. That strange stricken face was still turned full towards him, but he had an uneasy sense that he was not seen by the great, dull, dark eyes. He felt, too, that as she stood there with her hands tightly clasped together, she was not thinking even remotely of the choice he had set before her, though he knew somehow that she had heard his words and understood them. It was with an instinctive desire to rouse her, to bring back some expression to her face, that he said, with an awkward gentleness which was quite involuntary:

"There is no need for you to decide hastily. You understand the alternative thoroughly, no doubt. I will leave you my address, and you can write me your answer."

He felt in his pocket for his card-case, and the movement seemed to rouse her. She stopped him with a slight motion of her hand.

"There's no need," she said. As though the act of speaking had brought her back from somewhere far away, and as though the claims of the moment were gradually becoming present to her, she paused as though to gather force, and to close upon

herself a certain strangely fine reserve, which seemed at once to hedge her about and hold her aloof from the man to whom she spoke; and then she spoke, very quietly. "I don't want any money. If it is better that he should be free of me, he shall be free. That's all."

"You are making a mistake!" returned Falconer quickly. There was something about the dignity of her manner which made him feel curiously impotent and small, as though in the presence of an unknown power greater than himself, and the sense increased the touch of irritation he had already experienced. His tone was no longer coldly stern; it was insistent and annoyed. "You should consider your future. If you accept Mrs. Roden's offer and leave England with a small capital you will have a chance of beginning life again. The step you have lately taken may be your first step on the downward path—I conclude that it is. You should reflect how difficult it is to pause there. With a little money you may establish yourself in a respectable business, and in the course of time you may even redeem your unfortunate past."

Not a muscle of the still, pale face moved. It seemed to have grown strangely older and stronger in the course of the short interview, and it listened to him with an air of courteous patience which seemed to set an impassable distance between them. The perfect steadiness of her voice as she replied was the steadiness not of composure but of reserve.

"It is quite impossible!" she said.

"Then I am sorry to have to say that I consider you both foolish and ungrateful!" said Falconer with increasing severity. "You put it entirely out of our power to do anything for you. Am I to understand that you refuse to leave England?"

"I don't know. I must think!" Still the same distant, unmoved patience.

"You will do well to think," was Falconer's reply, "and to put away from you in doing so a false pride, which is entirely misplaced. I will give you twenty-four hours for consideration, and to-morrow afternoon I will call and see you again." On second thoughts it had occurred to Falconer that it would be a false step to give her his name and address. "I shall hope to find that you have come to a sensible decision."

He paused a moment, and she made a slight gesture of acquiescence, rather as though his words were indifferent to her

than in any token of assent to what he said. He added a stiff, formal "Good afternoon!" and as her lips moved mechanically as if to frame the words in answer, he turned and left the room.

As though his presence and his words had been so mere a drop in the deep waters of suffering which held her that his withdrawal affected her not at all, Clemence stood for the moment just as he left her, hardly conscious, as it seemed, that he was gone. Then, as though the sense that she was alone had come to her gradually, she dropped feebly into a chair, and let her face fall heavily forward upon the table.

MASHONALAND.

AFRICA has always been the dark continent—the continent of mysterious speculation and romance from the earliest historic times. As far back as Herodotus we have a distinct account of the exploration of its coasts by order of Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt, who about one thousand years before the Christian Era, despatched some vessels under the conduct of the Phœnicians, which sailed round Africa by way of the Red Sea and the east coast, and came home the third year through the Straits of Gibraltar. They seem to have landed once—where is not stated—and planted corn, and when it ripened, proceeded on their journey.

Herodotus also tells us of an embassy sent by Cambyses, King of Persia, to the King of Ethiopia, but how far this expedition penetrated into the interior is a matter of uncertainty. The embassy was not a success, and the presents sent by Cambyses, among which was a golden necklace, excited the disdain of the Ethiopian monarch, who conducted the envoys to the public prison, where all that were confined were secured by chains of gold.

From the time of Herodotus to the fall of the Roman Empire, mysterious stories seem to have reached the ears of civilisation: stories of the pigmies and the Mountains of the Moon, stories of women warriors, of white inhabitants, and other wonders more or less untrustworthy. But for a period of nearly a thousand years after the decline of the Roman Empire, not only was the interior of Africa once more shrouded in darkness, but the very coast-line itself at the close of the fourteenth century was only known to European

civilisation as far as the Strait of Babel-mandeb on the east, and Cape Nun on the western side.

The Portuguese claim to be the first navigators who put a girdle round Africa, and so far as European nations are concerned, this claim is undoubtedly well-founded. Gillianez, starting from Cape Bajador, opposite the Canaries, doubled the Cape of Good Hope in 1434, and sailing up the east coast reached Cape Guardafui, at the entrance of the Red Sea. Far from being the pioneers, however, the Portuguese in this voyage merely traversed the route already covered in an opposite direction by the Phœnicians two thousand five hundred years previously, and instead of being the first explorers of the coast, they were soon to learn that an earlier civilisation had been not only on the east and west coasts of the continent, but had penetrated far into the interior.

The prime motive of the Portuguese in undertaking these voyages was not, as some have supposed, to survey the coast of Africa, or in the hope of obtaining wealth from its shores. As was the case with Columbus, their chief ambition was to reach India, then considered to be the chief repository of the mineral and other treasures of the world. This may be seen by the conduct of Vasco da Gama, in his memorable expedition of 1497, when, after following the coast as far north as Melinde, he steered straight for India under the guidance of local pilots. But commercial activity was not lacking when the Portuguese first made their appearance in these waters. Arab traders from Mecca and other Red Sea ports, as well as Hindoos from India, were engaged in trade. It was due to this fact, and to the similarity in name of the principal port and outlet for the gold trade of the interior, that led the Portuguese to believe that in Sofala they had discovered the Ophir of the ancients.

Sofala, still so called, was the seaport and capital of an immense kingdom which extended from the River Limpopo northwards far beyond the Zambesi, and was captured by the Portuguese in 1505. They erected a fort which they called Fort Ophir, and the ruins of it still remain.

The whole of this territory seems to have belonged at this time to a powerful prince called Monomotapa, or Juiteva, for he was known by both titles; the first being probably a general one, meaning "Lord of the Mines," from the Bantu words "Bena"

and "Mona," answering to our chief, lord or master, and "Motapa," mine, from the root "tapa," to excavate. The two Portuguese historians, to whom we are chiefly indebted for accounts of these regions and their inhabitants, are De Barros, who was born in 1496 and died in 1570, and Father Ivano dos Santos, who appears to have been one of the missionaries of the order of St. Dominic, who embarked at Lisbon in April, 1506, and arrived at Mozambique on the thirteenth of August following. The accounts of these worthies must not be taken too literally, as, like their contemporaries who recounted the deeds of Cortes and his band among the Aztecs, they were more inclined to panegyric than historic accuracy. At the same time, whatever is interesting in their accounts had best be described in their own words. De Barros, in his "Asia," First Decade, Book x., chapter i., writes as follows:

"All the land which we include in the Kingdom of Sofala is a great region, ruled by a pagan prince named Benomotapa; it is enclosed like an island by two arms of a river, which issues from the most considerable lake in all Africa, which was much sought after by the ancients as being the hidden source of the famous Nile, whence also issues our Zaire—Congo—which flows by the kingdom of Congo. This prince, whom we call Benomotapa, or Monomotapa, is, as with us, an emperor, for this is the meaning of his name amongst them, and his state does not consist of much pomp or show about his person, for the greatest ornament which he has in his house are some cotton stuffs which are made with great labour in the country, each of which may be as large as one of our sumptuous robes, and worth from twenty to fifty cruzados. For insignia of his royal state he has a very small hoe with ivory head, which he always wears in his girdle in sign of peace, and another emblem is one or two assegais to denote justice and defence of his people. Under his lordship are some great princes, some of whom, bordering upon distant kings, at times revolt against him, and on this account he usually retains by him the heirs of such chiefs. There are no horses amongst them, so that Benomotapa makes war on foot with weapons such as bows and arrows, throwing darts, daggers, iron battle-axes, which are very sharp, and next his person he keeps over two hundred dogs, for they say that these are very faithful, both in the hunt and war." Dos Santos gives a some-

what different and fuller account of Monomotapa and his surroundings. It is, perhaps, more trustworthy, as he certainly lived at Sofala for some time, and probably accompanied Baretto in his military expeditions to the interior. He always, however, calls the Emperor by his title of Juiteva, and in this connection states that "it is common to the sovereign lord of the country bordering on the River Sofala, which, at his accession to that dignity, he assumes to the exclusion of the titles he might before have been known by; this dignity, in the esteem of the people, placing him on the level of the Deity."

The description of the Court and other ceremonials is too long for insertion here, so we will confine ourselves to one or two extracts recounting Baretto's expedition, the main object of which was to obtain possession of the gold and silver mines of the interior. "Don Sebastion was scarcely seated on the throne of Portugal before he resolved on sending an expedition to Sofala, entrusting the command to Francis Baretto, who, penetrating into the kingdom of Maçoronga and Manica, discovered mines of gold in these countries, of which, by his prudence and valour, he made himself master. In the prosecution of his designs it was necessary that he should pass through the territory of the Juiteva, who, objecting to the measure, prepared to resist. The resolution of the Portuguese enabled them, however, to open a passage for themselves through the files of the enemy. Baretto continued to follow up his conquests by land and sea. Juiteva at last fled from his capital, Zemboe, carrying the inhabitants to a neighbouring forest rather than risk the defence of the city. It was given up to pillage and fire, and the march was continued towards the kingdom of Manica, which was reached in a few days." Anxious as the Portuguese were to obtain a firm footing in the country, their methods of proceeding rendered their efforts abortive. Baretto, as well as their other leaders, was more of the military commander than the explorer, and the expeditions were of a purely military character when not undertaken for the purposes of plunder. Even their missionary efforts were carried on by force of arms. A Jesuit mission was despatched for the purpose of enlightening the subjects of Monomotapa, who were described as being "as black of soul as of body." These missionaries were directed "to subdue the aboriginal populations by their teachings

as the military subdued them by the sword."

Such methods could only result in disaster, and all that survives of the missionary efforts are a few songs repeated as potent spells by the Zambesi boatmen, in which may be recognised faint traces of the worship introduced by the Dominican and Jesuit fathers.

Faint as are the traces of Portuguese occupation of the immense tract of fertile and wealthy country now known as Mashona and Matabele lands, there was then in existence, a still older civilisation, of which Monomotapa and his people were certainly not the descendants, and which was possibly as far advanced beyond the Portuguese civilisation of that day as the rude culture of Monomotapa and his subjects, with their "souls as black as their bodies," was inferior to it. Of this civilisation there are still existing evidences, gigantic and conclusive.

This, at any rate, seems to have been the view taken by the Arab traders, to whom the Portuguese were indebted for a description of the ruins of Zimbabwe, as related by De Barros in his history. As the earliest account of these marvellous relics it is too important to be omitted: "There are other mines in a district called Torva. This land is near the other which we said consisted of extensive plains, and these mines are the oldest that are known in that region. They are all in a plain, in the middle of which stands a square fortress all of dressed stones within and without, well wrought, and of marvellous size, without any mortar showing the joinings, the walls of which are twenty-five hands thick, but the height is not so great as compared to the thickness. And above the gateway of that edifice is an inscription, which some learned Moorish traders, who were there, could not read nor say what writing it was. And grouped, as it were, round this structure are others on some heights, like it in the stonework and without mortar, in which is a tower twelve braças—seventy-two feet—high.

"When or by whom these edifices were built, the people of the country, being unlettered, have no memory, only they say they are the work of the devil, because, compared to their own power and skill, they do not think men could have made them; and some Moors who had seen them, when shown the work of our fortress of Sofala, the workmanship of the windows and arches, for comparison with the dressed

stonework of those buildings, said they were not to be compared, so clean and finished were they." Thus stands the only record which attempts to bridge over the immense gulf stretching from a remote antiquity to the arrival of the British in Mashonaland. Modern investigation has proved it to have been very inaccurate, and has also discovered similar ruins, as well as gold workings, evidently of the same date, scattered over the country at present ascertained to extend from the Zambesi as far south as the Limpopo, and from Sofala, as far west as the Kalihari desert.

The Charter of the British South African Company received the assent of the Queen in Council on the fifteenth of October, 1889, and early the following year, as soon as the rainy season was over, the pioneer force, under the guidance of the well-known African hunter, Mr. F. C. Selous, started from the Macloutsie River on their northerly expedition into Mashonaland, thus traversing a route almost at right angles to and possibly crossing that of the military expeditions of the Portuguese, undertaken from the east. But how vast a change had been wrought in three centuries! Of the semi-civilised Monomotapa and his subjects no descendants remained, unless, indeed, the pusillanimous Mashonas are the remnant of the once powerful race; and the expedition, while well-armed and prepared for any emergency, reached Fort Salisbury, the termination of its toilsome journey, without firing a single shot in anger. It must not, however, be supposed that there was no danger of bloodshed; on the contrary, it was confidently asserted that not a single member of the expeditionary force would return alive. The greater part of the territory through which the pioneers had to march was dominated by the warlike Matabeles, an offshoot of the Zulu nation, who migrated from Zululand under Mzilagaze, in 1822. The Mashonas, ostensibly the owners of the land were entirely under their subjection, and when not paying actual tribute, submitted without any show of resistance to the Matabele raids, in which their young men and maidens were carried off and their old men slaughtered.

The government of the Matabeles is an absolute monarchy, centred in Lobengula, the present King, whose word is law throughout the length and breadth of his dominions. He is generally described as being intelligent and of a kind-hearted and jovial disposition, averse to cruelty unless

necessitated by the savage nature of his subjects. Speaking on the subject of cruelty one day to Mr. E. A. Maunde, he said: "You see, you white men have prisons and can lock a man up safely. I have not. What am I to do? When a man would not listen to orders, I used to have his ears cut off as being useless, but whatever their punishment they frequently repeated their offence. Now I warn them, and a knob-kerried man never repeats his offence." Lobengula has also a strong vein of humour, amply illustrated by his letter to Sir John Willoughby, who suggested, on behalf of the English Government, that the King should have an English envoy at his court to advise him as to the best methods of governing his people:

"Sir, I wish to tell you that Umahiti and Babyane have arrived with Maunde. I am thankful for the Queen's word. I have heard her Majesty's message. The messengers have spoken as my mouth. They have been very well treated. The white people are troubling me much about gold. If the Queen hears I have given away the whole country it is not so. I have no one in my country who knows how to write. I do not understand where the dispute is because I have no knowledge of writing. The Portuguese say that Mashonaland is theirs, but it is not so. It is all Umziligazis' country. I hear now that it belongs to the Portuguese. With regard to her Majesty's offer to send me an envoy or resident, I thank her Majesty, but I do not need an officer to be sent. I will ask for one when I am pressed for want of one. I thank the Queen for the word which my messengers give me by mouth, that the Queen says I am not to let any one dig for gold in my country except to dig for me as my servant. I greet her Majesty cordially."

The two messengers referred to, Umahiti and Babyane, were the envoys who accompanied Mr. Maunde to England in 1888, and whose accounts of their visit to the country of the Great White Queen were so graphically described by him to the Geographical Society. Lobengula is personally well-disposed towards English colonists, but has great difficulty in keeping the turbulent section of his people in order. The younger Matabeles vehemently advocated the extermination of the whites, and this fact was probably answerable for the belief that the English would be annihilated.

Previous to the entering by the Pioneers

of a narrow pass seven miles in length, and eminently suitable for an ambuscade, a message came from Lobengula peremptorily forbidding any further advance, coupled with the threat of attack if his orders were not complied with. Colonel Pennyfather, the commander of the expedition, determined to press on notwithstanding; and a few days afterwards a private communication was received from Lobengula stating that his first message was necessitated by the attitude of his young men, but that he himself was friendly and would do all in his power to prevent hostilities.

Probably what some of his young men saw in camp helped in a great measure to cool the ardour of the turbulent sections. When darkness fell, the electric search-light got to work, and a waggon cover being utilised as a target, it was speedily torn to shreds by the hail of bullets from the Maxim gun. The expedition advanced until September the twelfth, when it finally halted, and the Colonel decided to build a fort, which was called Fort Salisbury, the most northerly settlement of the South African Company, the total distance from the Macloutsie River, three hundred and eighty miles, being traversed in sixty-eight days.

The present town of Salisbury is situated on the Mashonaland plateau at an altitude of over four thousand feet above the sea level. Its geographical position is $17^{\circ} 54' S.$ and $31^{\circ} 21' E.$ It is the seat of the government and the present terminus of telegraphic communication from the south. Close by there is a little wooded hill called the Kopje, on which a new fort has been erected. It commands the town and the country for miles round.

The capital, like the townships of Victoria and Umtali, is laid out on the American principle, the streets and avenues crossing each other at right angles. The thoroughfares are broad—Jamieson Avenue, in which are the Government buildings, having a width of a hundred and fifty feet, and though it is still grass-grown in places, and no attempt has been made at paving, it is speedily acquiring a pretentious appearance. Brick houses with iron roofs are rapidly displacing the old round Kaffir huts made of upright poles, plastered with mud, and grass-thatched roofs, the only habitations during the early days of the settlement. In laying out the town the future of Salisbury has not been forgotten: no trees are

allowed to be cut down within a radius of three miles.

The foresight of the Chartered Company in this respect compares favourably with that of most early settlers, who ruthlessly demolished the forests to supply timber for building purposes. As all goods had to come by bullock-waggon from Kimberley, a distance of nearly a thousand miles, the first venturesome traders who appeared on the scene obtained extravagant prices for their goods. At one time jam fetched six shillings a pound, butter twelve shillings a pound, and salt, often an unattainable luxury, a shilling a pound. A year afterwards, when Lord Randolph Churchill had his sale, prices were still very high, but now there are two or three big trading companies, as well as several stores where almost anything can be obtained at fairly reasonable prices, considering the expense of transport. Copper coins are unknown as a circulating medium. Sixpence is the lowest tender, so that, curiously enough, a box of matches costs as much as a pound of beef. The spiritual needs of the growing community have not been neglected. The Church of England, the Roman Catholics, and Methodists have each a place of worship, the latter body possessing one of the best built brick buildings in Salisbury. Even the Salvation Army is represented by a contingent with a band, whose rude music in lieu of anything better is duly appreciated. There is also a hospital managed excellently, and the Roman Catholic sisters, under the Superioress Mother Patrick, are idolised for their self-sacrificing devotion to the sick.

The government of the country which an intending colonist chooses as his future home is of more importance than he usually imagines. Englishmen, who have long enjoyed the blessings of liberty, are naturally prone to suppose that the laws which work so admirably at home will be found of equal efficacy in a new country. In this belief they are woefully at fault. Given a mixed white population placed in the midst of an uncivilised native race, whose only law is the whim of their chieftain, or the exigencies of the hour, it is impossible to determine offences against property or persons in the spirit that prevails in our English courts. It is to the credit of the South African Company that they have realised this, and have instituted Roman-Dutch law, which has been so successful a civilising medium

wherever adopted. The administration may be accurately defined as a parental despotism, the decision of Dr. Jamieson, the administrator, being final in all matters. Necessary, no doubt, as an administration of this kind is in a new colony, the tendency towards an English judicature is becoming every day more apparent, and trial by jury, which is being agitated for by a large section of the community, will no doubt be instituted when the increase of the English population renders it advisable.

Shortly after the site of the capital had been determined, the fascinating pursuit of gold prospecting engrossed the attention of a great number of the inhabitants, and prospective millionaires travelled north, south, east, and west, to the goldfields which surround Salisbury. Many of these are situated at a great distance, and, as may be imagined, journeying thither was sometimes very arduous and fraught with no little danger. Roads were soon made to the houses of the Mining Commissioners, situated in the centre of the more important goldfields, and along these routes little difficulty is experienced. A Scotch cart, dragged by oxen, can be used, and supplies transported from head-quarters in some quantities. But many of the goldfields lie out of the direction of these roads, and in crossing the Veldt pack-donkeys have to take the place of the Scotch cart. Even donkeys, however, have to be abandoned in what is popularly known as the "fly" country; as the tsetse fly is fatal to all animals. Kaffirs have then to carry the supplies, and necessaries alone can be taken. Necessaries may roughly be said to consist of blankets, tea, coffee, salt, sugar, boer-meal, matches, and cartridges. For some time donkeys were supposed to be capable of resisting the effects of the tsetse poison, but this has been proved to be a fallacy, although they have been known to survive a year. The tsetse is of a greyish colour, and slightly larger than our common house-fly. The bite acts in a very singular manner. After an animal has been bitten or "stuck," as it is called, no bad effects appear until it rains or the animal gets thoroughly wet; then in a few days the coat appears rough and staring, the victim becomes emaciated, and eventually dies from weakness. The fly appears to follow the large game, especially buffalo, and as these are rapidly disappearing it is becoming less formidable, and is chiefly confined to the low-lying dis-

tricts. The Mashonas dry and pound the fly and administer it to their dogs as a prophylactic.

When making long journeys it is usual for parties of two or three to go together, as the Kaffirs cannot be relied on in cases of sickness or danger, and will run away at the earliest opportunity. There have been many instances of natives stealing the blankets and gun of a prospector when attacked by illness and abandoning him on the Veldt. The Matabeles and the Mashonas are the Kaffirs usually employed by the whites. Another tribe called the Shanghaans, who come from the Portuguese territory, are also employed sometimes. The Shanghaans are the finest race, physically, finer even than the Matabeles, who have been contaminated by intermarriage with the Mashonas. The Shanghaans command with the Matabeles higher wages than the Mashonas, obtaining, as a rule, a pound a month and their food, while the Mashonas only receive a blanket. The ingratitude of Kaffirs is, perhaps, their most trying characteristic. They are willing and strong workers if properly looked after, but if you indulge them, overpay them, or give them presents, they become lazy and impudent at once. They consider such indulgence foolishness on your part, and will often look at a present disdainfully, saying, "Pecanini"—little. The wonderful machinery brought to their notice for the first time by the whites astonished the Kaffirs greatly. They marvel much at the power of the steam engines, the saw-mills, and the gold-mills, but are chiefly astonished at the fact that they can go on working night and day and require neither food nor rest.

The horses of the expedition also excited great interest, which perhaps is not so remarkable when we recollect that the animal was unknown in South Africa until the arrival of the Dutch and English; Dingiswayo, who is generally regarded as the founder of the Zulu military system, having owed much of his prestige to the fact that he returned to his dominions mounted on an English cavalry horse which he had received as a present at Cape Town in 1797; no such animal having been previously seen in Zululand.

A remarkable theory to account for the rising and setting of the sun is current amongst some of the natives. They believe that he descends at night into the

Zambesi, floats down with the current to the "Big Waters," whence he rises the following morning. They account for the greater duration of day during the summer months—the rainy season—by the fact that the Zambesi is flooded, and so carries the sun quicker to the sea.

Lions are seldom met with in Mashonaland—indeed, very few of the settlers have seen any. Even Mr. Selous was three years living almost entirely in the wilderness, where lions are plentiful, and yet never caught sight of one. Being nocturnal animals, they lie sleeping during the day in beds of reeds, or in the long grass, and it is only when night falls that they begin to prowl, usually in companies of four or five at a time. It is a common mistake to suppose that they roar when in pursuit of prey. When so engaged they make a low, purring noise, which appears to come from a distance, but which in reality may be quite close; the roaring, on the other hand, is an indication that they have satisfied their hunger. Lying half asleep on the Veldt, with no covering but a blanket, the low, purring sound of these animals is anything but pleasant. It is not an uncommon one, however, and inured by habit and overcome by fatigue, one drops off to sleep in spite of the danger.

The rivers in Mashonaland literally swarm with crocodiles. Some casualties have occurred through these monsters; but it is generally believed that they are only dangerous during the rainy season, when, owing to the muddiness of the waters, they are unable to catch the fish they feed upon. They are very quick in detecting the presence of a human being, and can be seen to glide off the rocks into the water hundreds of yards distant.

One of the most terrible dangers in these unexplored regions is getting lost on the Veldt. Mr. Selous has described his experiences in his well-known book, "A Hunter's Wanderings in South Africa"; and since the expedition of the Pioneers similar experiences have been undergone, sometimes with much more fatal results. In journeying from the camp, often for weeks at a time, one has to depend for food chiefly on one's rifle, and it is easy in the ardour of the chase to lose one's bearings. So long as you have a Kaffir with you there is no trouble, but if you happen to be alone, and have not taken your bearings by the sun with sufficient

accuracy, the results may be fatal, or if not fatal, sometimes even worse. Instances have been known of men going mad through being lost in this manner.

One man who was on his way from the Macloutaie River to Fort Salisbury with the hospital sisters left the road on a short shooting excursion. He was missing forty-two days, and was then found by two Boer hunters seventy-five miles from the road. When discovered he was living in a hole in the ground near some water, which he was afraid to leave, and seemed quite demented. He eventually recovered, and is now at Salisbury. He said he remembered nothing after the first five days, during which time he had lived on two partridges which he had shot. It is believed that the rest of the time he must have subsisted on "Kloppers," or Kaffir oranges, the fruit of the mapole-tree. They are somewhat larger than our oranges, with an external rind as hard as horn, and contain a thick liquid of an acid-sweet taste.

Although the colonisation and development of the country have chiefly depended, and will probably depend for some time to come, on its mineral wealth, the agricultural resources offer the fairest prospects in the future. Mashonaland is an extensive tableland, well watered throughout owing to its position between the Zambesi and Crocodile Rivers. It is from three to five thousand feet above the sea level, and its area is nearly equal to that of Germany. In the valleys the natives, without effort, raise large crops of "mealies," or Indian corn, Kaffir corn, rice, pumpkins, potatoes, and tobacco; whilst oats and other cereals have been successfully cultivated by the whites. Vineyards have also been started, and most of our English fruit-trees, as well as oranges, lemons, and bananas, should thrive here. Cotton and coffee, it is supposed, would do very well, but neither has been cultivated as yet.

The native cattle are small and not very useful for draught purposes, but are excellent milkers. Nearly all the draught oxen are of the colonial breed, while others are brought from Matabeleland for the purposes of slaughter. Sheep-farming has not yet been attempted, and its success is considered doubtful. The Kaffirs have both sheep and goats, but they are of a smaller size than those known to us. It is remarkable that the domestic animals of the natives are all smaller than ours, probably the effects of in-breeding.

Fowls, for instance, are about the size of partridges, and their eggs are correspondingly small. The best farmers in the country are the Boers, and the Chartered Company is anxious to get as many of them as possible to settle in Mashonaland. Persons to whom the company grants farms are allowed to peg out fifteen hundred "morgen," or a little more than three thousand acres, in any part of the country, with the exception of known gold-fields, or within three miles of a township. A number of Boers have pegged out farms in this manner which are in a flourishing condition. They are shy, however, of settling under any government, preferring the independent life to which they have been accustomed. Although a fine sturdy race and the descendants of the original "boer-trekkers" of South Africa, the Boers are very illiterate, and it is as much as some of the older ones can do to sign their own names. This feat is an event in their lives, and is accompanied by befitting solemnity. An instance occurred when a Boer farmer had to sign an important document. After much difficulty he obtained pen and ink, and the "vrow" arranged the room with care, putting the chairs and tables in their places as if for an important event. She then led her old man to the table and settled him comfortably. This done, in a stentorian voice she shouted to her progeny in Dutch: "Children, children, go outside; father will sign his name!"

The country is well wooded, though the trees are not large, except on the banks of rivers. There are vast forests of the mompani, a hard wood, very useful for building purposes, while the bark tans leather excellently. It is supposed to be capable of withstanding the depredations of the white ants, and this would render it very valuable, as these insects play sorry havoc with timber, as well as proving an occasional pest to the farmer. They would be a greater annoyance to him, but luckily prefer sandy to alluvial soils. These white ants are one of the most remarkable features in the natural history of Mashonaland. They build immense mounds of an iron-grey colour, sometimes covered with vegetation, which are as hard as cement. In the neighbourhood of the Hunyani River these anthills frequently attain the dimensions of a small cottage. They generally have one or two openings on the top, about eight or nine inches wide, but curiously enough the ants are never

seen on the outside of their dwellings. Sometimes they build round large trees, which seem to be growing out of the ant-hills. When they attack an object they generally do so on the side not exposed to the light. They are great pests, and have often been known to destroy a pair of boots in a single night. They are very destructive to tents, riddling all parts which touch the ground. Leather, blankets, wood, hardly anything except metal is safe from them. When they attack a tree they do so by building a tunnel of clay up the side, which screens them from the light and also protects their bodies, which are remarkably soft, from their numerous enemies.

In all tropical and sub-tropical regions climatic conditions are of the utmost importance to the would-be colonist. In this respect Mashonaland is especially fortunate. Owing to the great elevation of the tableland it is infinitely more healthy than the low-lying Portuguese territory along the coast. For eight months in the year, from April to November, the air is dry and invigorating. During the winter months, May, June, and July, although the thermometer may register eighty degrees in the shade at noon, it becomes very cold at night. The hottest months in the year are September and October, just before the commencement of the rainy season, but even then, owing to the dryness of the atmosphere, the evenings and mornings are cool and pleasant. During October it is necessary to thoroughly overhaul the thatch of the huts, which gets chopped to pieces by the rats during the dry season. If this be neglected, the entire roof is in danger of being washed away, so violent are the tropical rains, which, here as elsewhere in these latitudes, are accompanied by terrific thunderstorms.

In spite of the natural resources of the country, and the favourable climate, one great drawback to its colonisation has hitherto existed owing to the difficulties of transport—all goods having to be brought from the south by bullock-waggon, as the country between Salisbury and the east coast is infested by the tsetse. This drawback will shortly cease to exist. The Chartered Company are in the act of building a railway through this region which will probably be finished in the course of the year. Mashonaland will then have an outlet to the sea at Beira, which lies only three hundred miles east of Salisbury, thus

rendering easily accessible a new country, eminently suitable for British colonisation, and well calculated to relieve the pressure of our teeming population at home.

WITH THE SMUGGLERS.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

THE news of Pochet's arrest caused great lamentation at Sugny; not so much out of sympathy with him, as on account of the blow it gave to the "fraudeurs" trade. There were a few surmises as the chance of Léon Regnault keeping his pledge to Pauline, but that was a mere side issue of no importance in comparison with the difficulty of finding another accomplice as shrewd and daring as old Pochet.

"My tobacco is drying grand this year," said old Servais dolefully one evening a little later as we sat in the bar at Regnault's. "I never smelt anything finer. But what's the use if it all has to be sold inland?"

"Ay, indeed," said another; "the best leaf will be a mere drug in all the markets we can get to. If they'd only left us Pochet for another six weeks."

Then some one turned to me:

"And you, Jules, who were in such a hurry to be first in the field with your bargain. You haven't gained much."

"Just given yourself the trouble of making two bargains instead of one," grunted Servais, "that's all."

"You're out there," I said; "the bargain I made holds good. It wasn't made with Pochet at all."

"Not with Pochet!" they all cried at once; "then with whom was it?"

"With Lambert of the Café Marteau, by Sedan," I replied.

"Was it a good one?" I was asked.

As I told the price Lambert had agreed to pay me, there was a murmur of applause.

"He's wide awake, is our Jules," said my father, "for all he's so quiet."

"But, lad," said Servais, who was an authority on such matters, "it'll be sharp practice to smuggle half a hundred of tobacco into the banlieue of Sedan."

"It's not a job for a fool," I replied; "but, you see, the douaniers will count on our being frightened by Pochet's capture. They won't be expecting us to run anything just yet. I shall take advantage of that, and get it through on Thursday morning."

"Thursday morning? Not by daylight?"

"Yes, by daylight," I replied. "The bolder the better."

My father shook his head.

"You'll run your neck into a noose, Jules," he said.

"I don't think I shall," I answered. "I think I'm pretty safe. I was at the mill to-day, and I found that the miller's big Flanders horse has died of old age. I've promised the miller to take the carcass and sell it for him at the shambles in Sedan."

They all understood. Carcasses of animals had, from time to time, played an important part in a case of "fraude"; and never, as yet, had they attracted suspicion. I was warmly congratulated on my luck in having secured such a rare thing as a dead horse, and much envied also.

The next day we packed the precious freight carefully and neatly into its strange receptacle; then we placed it on the top of a load of old iron which my father had to send into Sedan. There was positively no outward trace of the valuable cargo which was stowed away under the gaunt sides of the great unwieldy carcass; on that point I was quite satisfied, even without the opinion of Regnault and Servais, and others who were accustomed to the unexpected ways of excisemen. Nevertheless, the satisfaction I felt was by no means complete. I had no doubts as to the success of my bold plan, still I was restless and anxious, and when all was in readiness for my start the following morning, I wandered off into the forest to try and get rid of my uncomfortable feeling. The fact was, the tacit promise I had given Pauline about smuggling kept on torturing me continually. Was it really a promise, or was it not? At the moment I put my sample of tobacco back into my pocket, I had meant her to understand that I was going to turn over a new leaf. Well, such was my intention still. What I was about to do was not really a breach of faith. When I had suggested M^{lle} Letellier as an advocate for her father, I had fancied that he would plead without a fee. When I had found out my mistake, I had not had the heart to let her suffer through it. If I had sent my tobacco to Liège I should have realised barely two-thirds of what Lambert was going to pay me, and even with Lambert's price and all my savings I should still have to borrow twenty francs to make up the sum for which I had rendered myself responsible.

In my second interview with the socialist

lawyer he had explained to me that, though he sometimes made a free gift of his eloquence, there must be something in the case to justify his liberality; whereas, he should seriously compromise his reputation if he identified himself so completely with such an ignoble cause as that of an over-reaching smuggler. The sentence, he told me, would be probably ten years' penal servitude, which for a man of Pochet's age and habits would be virtually for life. If, therefore, I considered his fee too high, little would be lost by my refusing to pay it. But I had stuck to my first decision, and surely Pauline would overlook the means when she thought of the end. Still my promise worried me, and all the salve I could lay on my conscience did not bring me comfort. Now, under the circumstances, it would seem more likely that I should have avoided Pauline than that I should have sought her; a kind of impulse, however, led me straight to the Café Pochet. The longing to see her honest eyes raised gratefully to me as to her only friend, overcame the fear of the questions she might ask me. On the bench outside the door, in the twilight, sat Pauline; at the sound of my step she sprang up.

"Ah, Jules," she said, "it is you at last. Why have you not been here before?"

I faltered out excuses—I had been busy. I had not known she would be expecting me. She looked at me half-reproachfully.

"And had you nothing to tell me of all that passed between you and the lawyer?"

So I had to repeat to her my interview with Maître Letellier, and to try to word my account so as not to tell her what was absolutely untrue. Yet I did deceive her, and my heart smote me for it, most of all when at the end she took my hand in both of hers and raised it to her lips, without speaking, and I heard a sort of sob. Then, I scarce know how it was, but I found myself trying to speak to her of the great love I had borne her so long, and when words would not come freely enough, I folded my arms about her, and drew her, without any resistance on her part, close to me. She murmured something which I did not hear, but still we understood one another, and our joy seemed purer and more sacred in that sweet silence, which seems like an eternity when I look back upon it.

Suddenly a step sounded on the road, and a jeering laugh made me start to my feet. There, close in front of me, with

pale face and angry eyes, stood Léon Regnault.

For a moment I changed places with him in fancy, and pitied him accordingly, but at his first words my pity melted away.

"Confound your impudence!" he cried. "I've tracked you, you see, and now I want to know what you mean."

"My meaning is plain enough," I retorted. "Moreover, you have no right to ask it in that tone."

"I shall ask it in any tone I choose," he said. "I ask you again what right you have to come sneaking here to make love to the girl who is to be my wife!"

"Sneaking!" I cried, losing my temper. "You, who follow and spy on me, are the sneak; you, who tell lies about your relations to the girl I mean to marry, are the sneak. It is I who demand an explanation from you."

He raised his clenched fist, and I stood ready for him. I longed for his blow to fall that I might begin to punish him as he deserved. But Pauline was too quick for us. She placed herself between us, and looking from one to the other, said:

"Jules—Monsieur Léon, please let me speak. I am not worth a quarrel. It would be dreadful if you fought for my sake. Besides, there is no promise between me and you, Monsieur Léon; I told you long ago that I could not be bound by what my father had said. He was afraid of offending you, and he tried to persuade me. He was sadly afraid of you, but I should never have given way, and now that he has no longer anything to fear I feel quite free. But do not be angry; there are many better girls than I am. I am not worth a quarrel."

She spoke so straightforwardly that he ought to have felt the justice of her words, but perhaps it was hard on him. His face grew paler still.

"I have been made a fool of," he hissed, "and I suppose you think you've got the better of me, but let those laugh who win; perhaps I shall have a chance of making a fool of one of you before long, and then you may look out."

Then he turned away and walked off among the trees in the direction of home.

The next morning at daybreak I started on my venture. I whistled merrily as I drove along the high road to Sedan, partly because it was best to look quite gay and innocent, and partly because my heart was overflowing with happiness and joy. My

scruples and doubts had all vanished. Pauline really loved me; what I was doing was for love of her. I was sure she would forgive me if she knew.

By seven o'clock I was in front of the douane, and half-a-dozen officials were carefully and noisily inspecting my freight. I submitted without uneasiness; my precautions were all so well taken that I feared nothing. When, after a long examination, I was allowed to proceed, I bade them a civil "bon jour," I felt so happy that I could afford to be friendly with any one, even a douanier. Then I resumed my day-dreams at the point where they had been broken off. We had spoken of our future the previous evening—after Léon had gone—vaguely, but still as of a future to be spent together. For that future I would now begin to plan, and work, and save.

The Café Marteau, the little estaminet I had visited after my interview with Maître Letellier, took me almost by surprise when I reached it. I drove into the yard behind the house, and there Lambert helped me to carry the horse's carcass into the stables, and to unpack and weigh out my successful "fraude." There was no one about, yet we spoke little, for walls have ears, and birds can carry tales.

"Twenty-four kilos, good measure," I said, when the last packet was laid on the scales; "and you'll pocket thirty per cent. on it, for finer leaf is not to be found."

"I hope I may," said Lambert; "but you've made a tight bargain."

He pulled out a handful of notes as he spoke.

"Let's settle here," he said. "We are quieter."

"Sorry to interrupt," said a voice at the door, "but it is my painful duty to remind you that as this tobacco has paid no excise, it is confiscate to the Government of the French Republic."

Yes, there they were, the douaniers whom I had left behind so confidently an hour before. There they were, with mocking, triumphant faces, and one was laying his hand on my shoulder.

"Jules Bridoux, you incur a fine of one hundred francs; in default of payment you will be lodged in Sedan gaol." Then he turned to Lambert. "We've had our eye on you for some time, too. We let this load pass just to make sure of you." Then Lambert's fine was assessed, and when he had paid it and begged hard not to have

his license cancelled, I was marched off between two douaniers, back along the road I had come—back to Sugny like a beaten hound, with my heart full of dismay and despair.

Nearly all the village, young and old, stood round with compassionate faces while I paid out the last sou of my savings to the unrelenting douaniers.

"There's treachery somewhere," said old Servais, when the officials had gone, "treachery and foul play. The countryside is going to the dogs."

"But who would betray Jules?" said my father. "Who could have a grudge against a quiet lad like him?"

I said nothing. I walked into the Auberge Regnault and looked round.

"Where is Léon?" I asked.

"He's gone over to Charleville to his uncle's," was the answer.

"Then you'd best tell him to stop there," I replied, "for the day he shows his face here again he'll have a long reckoning to settle with me."

I did not give them time to answer, but went out again, and before evening every one knew that Léon Regnault and I had quarrelled the previous night, and that he had taken his revenge.

"It's like cutting off his nose to spite his face," said some one, in the torrent of vituperation that followed the report. "What can a man of Sugny expect who has had dealings with the douane?"

The next thing to be done was to see Maître Letellier. All might yet go well if he would consent to wait a little for his fee. But on this point I found him inexorable. In fact, as he informed me, he was not sorry to have a valid reason for recalling a promise which he had made in the teeth of his better judgement.

"Besides," he added, "Pochet will probably require no defence. He is, I hear, very ill in prison from the effects of the fight at the time of his capture."

So there was the end of all my great scheme. My savings were spent, and my tobacco lost; still I was not completely cast down. Pauline and I were plighted lovers. If troubles were thickening round her my love would be the more necessary to her, and since she was mine I did not grudge what I had lost in her service.

It was not till the afternoon of the day following my misfortune that I found myself free to go to her. She would, probably, have heard nothing of what had happened until I told her myself. I

imagined how my failure would serve her as a moral to point the lecture she had already given me. If she scolded me, I would bear it quietly; but surely when she knew all she would not be very angry.

At the door of the Café Pochet I heard the children's voices within clamouring and crying. A voice—not that of Pauline—was raised to enforce peace and order. I opened the door. A woman, whom I had never seen, looked at me enquiringly as I entered.

"It is Jules Bridoux, ma tante," said the eldest child, by way of explanation.

"Is Pauline gone out?" I asked—why did it all look so strange?

"Pauline has gone right away," wailed the children in chorus. "She went early this morning."

"Has she gone to her father?" I asked.

"That's no one's business but her own," replied the stranger ungraciously. "However, as you're Jules Bridoux, this letter must be for you. She left it to be sent to Sugny; you'd have got it to-morrow."

She spoke in a hard, unsympathetic manner. I asked no further questions, but bidding her good day, turned to go. I wanted to read my letter—to know the reason of Pauline's strange, sudden absence, to see how she would address me, to gladden my heart with any phrase that I could construe into tenderness. But when, outside in the silence of the forest, I had torn the envelope open, I read its contents through and through before the meaning grew clear to my bewildered senses. And this was what I read on the sheet which I had kissed as I unfolded it, because it was my first love-letter:

"I'm not much of a letter-writer, Jules," she wrote; "this is only a few lines to bid you good-bye. After what I said to you that night before father was took, you can't expect me to have any more to do with you. I couldn't ever trust you again now you've broken a promise like that. That's why I'm gone away. Most likely we shall never see one another again, but if we do, there must be no more said about what's been between us. That's all over, and I expect I shall never feel so happy again. But I'm not to blame. I'm true to my word if you aren't.—PAULINE."

That was all—she had left me—given me up, and without giving me the chance

of explaining myself. In my first movement of helpless rage I crushed her letter in my hands, then I smoothed it out and kissed it, and the hot tears ran down my cheeks and blurred the cruel words.

I can scarcely say how the days went after that. I made no attempt to track Pauline. After all, she was right; I had deceived her, and if her trust in me was gone, we were better apart.

Then we heard that Pochet's illness was going badly; but even that had no importance to me. I barely wondered if Pauline knew that his chance of being defended by Maître Letellier was gone. I had lost all interest in everything. My neighbours thought it was because my smuggling misadventure had depressed me. I let them believe what they chose. Naturally, the license of the Café Pochet had been forfeited, and people had come to consider it as a natural result of things that the talked-of marriage between Pauline and Léon Regnault should be spoken of no more. Old Regnault tried to insinuate that Léon's uncle at Charleville wanted his nephew to marry and settle there; but the tale did not meet with credence. We knew that he had other reasons for keeping away from Sugny.

So the autumn wore on, till it was time to plough the land which had borne my ill-fated crop of tobacco.

"I shall grow corn next year," I said to myself, as I followed the plough drearily up and down the damp furrows. "I shall keep my faith to Pauline better than she thinks."

Then I thought bitterly of the long years that lay before me to spend without her. As to loving another woman in her place, that thought never entered my head.

"Jules Bridoux," called a voice across the field, breaking in upon my melancholy reverie, "here is a letter for thee. I may as well give it thee now as carry it down to the village."

It was the postman on his daily round. I hurried to meet him across the field—a letter was a rare event in my life. I looked at the address, written in a stiff, careful handwriting. Did my eyes deceive, or was it really from Pauline? My hands trembled as I opened it. Yes, there at the end of a few short lines stood her name.

"DEAR JULES," it ran, "it is very bold of me to ask you to forgive me. I was all in the wrong. It is too long to write,

and I could tell you easier ; only perhaps you are too angry to come and hear what I have to say.—PAULINE."

Angry—too angry ! Well, yes, I had been angry ; but if she was ready to say she had been in the wrong, if all that had been crooked was to be made straight, what was the use of being angry ? I sent my little brother home with the horse and plough and went straight as I was to the quondam inn at the cross-roads.

I found her where we had parted all those weeks before, on the bench outside the door. She looked even paler than of old, and she was in mourning. She rose as I came, and held out both her hands to me.

"Ah, Jules," she said, "you are a hundred times better than I am, and I judged you so hardly."

I tried to tell her that I had forgiven her, that so long as she was ready to come to me the past was no more than a dream. Then she began her tale.

"You have heard of father's illness," she said, "and perhaps you have heard how it has ended ?"

She touched her black dress and went on tremulously :

"He was buried a few days ago. I had taken a place as servant in Sedan, but I left it to nurse him when at last he got leave to have me. When it was all over, I began to try and think of all I ought to do to put matters straight, and first of all I went to that lawyer whom you told me of. When I said I had come to tell him that though father would not need his services I should like to thank him, he stared at me in great surprise ; then he asked me a number of questions, and I could see that though I was in such trouble he was angry with me. Then he told me that there must be some mistake somewhere, for that he had refused to plead the case ; at which I was greatly surprised. 'You were not going to plead, monsieur ?' I exclaimed. 'No,' he replied, 'and if you want to know any more about the matter, you had better ask the young man who undertook to raise the fee, and then found himself unable to do so.' Then he bade me good morning, and I could not ask him any more. And now, Jules," she continued, in the straightforward way I knew so well, "will you tell me the part of the story I do not understand ? I can guess it, but I had rather hear it from you."

So I told her all, from the very beginning, how I had made the mistake about Maître Letellier ; how the longing to serve her had tempted me to break my new-made resolution ; how Léon's treachery had ruined my plan ; and how, when I had come to tell her all, I had found that she had heard already, and had misinterpreted what she had heard. I cut her short when she began to reproach herself and to beg me to forgive her. We understood one another now, and why should we not bury the trouble that had parted us ?

My parents took more kindly to my betrothed wife than I expected. Indeed, now that Pochet was dead, there was nothing they could urge against her.

We were married about a year later, and at Pauline's desire I left Sugny and all its temptations behind. Since I have moved further from the border I have devoted myself more and more to bee-keeping, till now, I am proud to say, I am considered quite an authority on the subject.

There is certainly less risk in my present employment than in running contraband goods, and bees are, on the whole, less difficult to deal with than douaniers. As to the profits, Pauline, who keeps the accounts, assures me that they are something remarkable. The men of Sugny, however, shake their heads at me as a renegade, while the children in their play still serve their earliest apprenticeship as "fraudeurs."

MAYDAY.

COMPARED with the Mayday of the poets, and with that depicted by the annalists of ancient sports and customs, the Mayday of our present era shows a curious contrast. "Preparations for Mayday," which formed the headline of paragraphs in the daily papers of last year, have no connection with maypoles, garlands, morris dancers, or festive milkmaids. The preparations are in the way of massing troops and police about the chief public resorts of the capital cities of the Continent. We even read of a Spanish squadron of an ironclad and three cruisers, as ordered to the scene of apprehended disturbances. For, last year, as Mayday fell on a Sunday, the conjunction was deemed ominous of danger to public security. The day has been adopted by general consent as the great labour festival of the year, and as the

anarchists of the Continent were expected to take advantage of the occasion to develop their peculiar and explosive methods, a rather lively time was looked forward to by those having the charge of public security.

In Paris an amusing brochure, largely sold in the streets on Mayday, burlesqued the uneasy anticipations of timid souls. The morning opens with dynamite explosions, and the destruction of public monuments; at noon there follows "explosion of the sun and universal darkness," eventually succeeded by a general reconciliation of all classes, rather superfluous under circumstances such as our poet Pope seems to have foreseen:

Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And universal darkness buries all.

But Paris, like Vienna and Berlin, bristled with soldiers, ready for all emergencies, but kept carefully out of sight. Nothing happened on that occasion, nothing ever does when it is expected to; but then the weather was unfavourable for popular commotions, the elements fought for society, and rough and rainy weather kept the dangerous people at home.

But it is curious to note that Mayday, apart from its floral and festive celebrations, had always on its popular side a trace about it of the spirit of revolt. It is the general holiday of labour, of the ploughman, of the milkmaid, of the chimney-sweep, as representatives of the lowest ranks in the social hierarchy, when they took occasion, in whatever merry guise, to levy a kind of blackmail, or ransom, from their overlords and other superiors. Robin Hood is the hero of the day, who, in the popular mythology, is the champion of the poor against the rich, of the peasant against the lord, of those who want against those who have. The mummers as they went about masquerading—the boldest and sprightliest as Robin Hood, the native humorist as Friar Tuck, and the pretty village lass as Maid Marian—bore themselves with all the pride of outlaws and free foresters, to whom the game laws were a dead letter, while for once they fared like their betters,

Feasting on pheasant, river fowl, and swan,
With Robin at their head and Marian,

That Mayday, even in the sixteenth century, was regarded with some apprehension by the ruling powers is evident from what occurred upon what is known as Evil Mayday in 1517. Always in the city of London, the festival of May had

been kept up with due celebration. The great city maypole,

The Great Shaft of Cornhill, as Chaucer has it, was raised each year over against the church of St. Andrew, called undershaft from that circumstance, with a general outpouring of popular clamour and rejoicing. But in 1517 there was a popular grievance, widely felt, in the encouragement given to aliens attracted to England by the wealth of a sumptuous court, who undersold the traders and craftsmen of the city, and Mayday brought about a great assemblage of London 'prentices who hunted out these aliens and destroyed their workshops, making a great riot in the city, which was eventually quelled with much bloodshed and cruelty; and some two thousand young fellows were captured and sent to King Harry at Westminster, with ropes about their necks, and might have been hanged for their Mayday sports, but that Queen Catherine, whose influence was still paramount with the young King, begged their lives, and sent them away rejoicing.

But never after that year was the city maypole raised, for henceforth the fathers of the city discountenanced the gathering of young people, hot-headed and mutinous, on that especial day, and if there existed any chance of the revival of the Mayday festival it was presently extinguished by the rising flood of Puritanism. The preachers denounced the maypole as idolatrous, and the elders, nothing loth, cut it in pieces and chopped it up for firewood.

But if there was an element of popular discontent in the rougher Mayday assemblages, surely there is something charming in its floral celebrations, and the mirthful gathering of the may by young men and maids half-intoxicated with the balmy breath of spring, and rejoicing in the fresh morning air as they dance over the dew-spangled meads. It is pleasant to read of King Harry as he rides out a-maying, in his joyous youth, with Queen Catherine at his side, and many a lord and lady gay; how they rode from Greenwich Palace to Shooters Hill over the dark heath and golden common, and with what a glorious view in the fine May morning from that unrivalled summit. There they meet Robin Hood and two hundred archers all in green, who shoot off flights of whistling arrows for their delectation, and afterwards entertain their monarch and his friends with archers' fare, wine and venison, laid out in some rural

harbour. The Aldermen and Sheriffs of London also go a-maying in Stepney Wood, and poet Lydgate is up in time to send them, by a pursuivant, a poem of sixteen staves in metre royal.

The ancient Court of France, too, had its Mayday customs; the may was cut in the Bois de Boulogne and the Royal Palace adorned with the branches. The goldsmiths of Paris, too, presented a bough of white may each year to the altar of Notre Dame. Yet in France Mayday till recently has not counted for much; nor is it a special festival with the Celtic races. Welsh folk-lore has little to say to it; and although in Ireland it was held sacred to the fairies, yet no special celebration attached to it. But one curious legend relates that on Mayday King O'Donoghue, the Irish Arthur, rides forth in full panoply from one of the lakes of Killarney, as if expecting that at some time or other his countrymen would be wanting him on that particular day.

But with us English the former importance of the festival has left numerous traces. Why the sweeps in particular should have kept up the Mayday mummery is an insoluble mystery. But even at this day pretended sweeps dress up and make a shift to get a few coppers, while the master sweep in his smart little pony-cart drives by and smiles compassionately at the display. For the sweep of to-day is on a very different footing from those described in the "Gent's Magazine": "The late benevolent Mrs. Montagu"—famous for her feather hangings, of which Cowper sings:

The birds put off their every hue
To dress a room for Montagu

—"gave for many years on Mayday an entertainment at her house in Portman Square to that unfortunate class of miserable objects, the chimney-sweepers of the metropolis. Roast beef and plum-pudding was followed by a dance, and a shilling at departure." The story went that Mrs. Montagu had lost a child, who had been stolen by the sweeps, and that her feast was given in hopes of one day recognising her missing offspring; as in Montgomery's ballad:

"Hark! hark!" she cried; the wind appeared to sleep.

Again poor Edwin shouted, "Sweep! sweep! sweep!"

"My child! my child!" she cried, with transports wild,

"Oh, Heaven, it is—it is my child, my child!"

Somehow a little bit of the romance of

life has gone out with the abolition of climbing boys. There was a thrill in the sight of a sweep, with poor Edwin's fate recalled to the childish mind by nurse's solemn warnings. And the Mayday celebration, with its barbaric music, and its mysterious Jack-in-the-green, when, with other strange figures, some grinning black fellow would represent the foul fiend and drive lads and lasses screaming before him, was a thing to move the stoutest heart.

The Mayday of the milkmaids has vanished altogether from public notice with the milkmaids themselves, and the milkwomen, who within living memory were the chief retailers of milk in the London streets, and who kept up some observance of Mayday to the last. Probably there is no parish in England where the pleasant custom of choosing a May Queen is still observed, and although not many years ago a maypole was one of the ornaments of a village-green in Sherwood Forest, the villagers were far too staid and self-respecting to join hands and dance round in a ring either on Mayday or any other day in the year.

More substantial than the fleeting glories of the May Queen was the portion in some parishes bestowed upon the most deserving young woman of a marriageable age, and for this purpose many bequests have been made. An ancient charity school still existing among the London Docks used to elect on Mayday each year one of its girls, who received one hundred pounds as her marriage portion. It is not to be supposed that the maiden was expected to marry then and there, for May marriages are always unlucky, nor did the governors of the charity undertake to find a husband, but it was presumed that a girl with a hundred pounds to her portion would only experience the difficulties of choice among so many.

An observance of more modern origin, but which has disappeared with the class it concerned, was the general parade on Mayday of stage-coaches decked with branches and flowers, and with their coachmen in full gala costume. A new white beaver with proudly curling brim was the correct thing on the occasion; and a faint trace of the custom is to be found in the manners of the modern 'bus driver, who on Mayday is pretty sure to assume a new white hat, and to wear a bouquet of flowers in his buttonhole.

But the great Mayday of the present century was no doubt the one commemorated in a contemporary ballad, which might be sung to the old-fashioned comic tune, "When we went out a-shooting":

I never shall forget the day,
The glorious, glorious first of May,
When our gracious Queen Victoria
Opened the palace of crystal.

It was quite an ideal time that, as those who survive and witnessed it will testify, full of happy forecasts of peace and goodwill, of which the programme has not been quite fulfilled, and the world which will see a somewhat similar celebration when our gracious Queen goes to open the Colonial Palace, which has indirectly sprung from the other, is a good deal sadder if not much wiser than it was in that golden prime.

As to Mayday up to date, it must be said that if we have lost some pretty, time-expired customs, we have started others that may be prized by future generations. Mayday is sure to see a cart-horse parade of some kind, and there will be processions of water-carts, of dust-carts, and other municipal vehicles, all decked out with ribbons and flowers, with horses shining and sleek, and harness at its brightest. There will be prizes for the smartest turn-out, and some of the London vestries give a feast on the occasion, another faint survival of the stage-coachman's banquet.

But apart from any definite observance, there is always about Mayday, if the skies are propitious, the pleasant sense of renewed life and enjoyment. Great-coats and wraps are cast aside without regard to the prudent adage, "Till May be out, ne'er cast a clout." People are crowding on the tops of the omnibuses, the summer four-horse coaches are starting with teams as fresh as paint, while the horns rouse cheery echoes about Charing Cross and Piccadilly. The picture exhibitors are opening their doors: the posters on the walls announcing tourist arrangements are scanned with interest. As in Chaucer's days, "Now longen folk to go on pilgrimage." And they do go, more or less, although London itself is never more attractive than at this particular time. The parks are putting on their gayest aspect; the trees, the sward, the sparkling waters, make a pretty scene, even without the gay people; and the demonstrator from Whitechapel, who has marched with drums beating and banners

displayed all those weary miles, feels as he stretches himself on the sward that he is having a good time of it just now.

Although May Fair has long been abolished, yet what a fine Vanity Fair is going on all day long and every day as long as the season lasts! Or if you are of a more serious turn, what excitement is waiting for you in the Strand! What a concourse of nice comfortable-looking people about the classic portico of Exeter Hall; what a confluence of black coats and black silk petticoats, what pretty, demure-looking young maids and sweet, but some sour, old ones! Church dignitaries, too, you see, and powerful Nonconformist divines, and stout, perspiring promoters of movements with anxious faces and hands full of papers. And all are swallowed up in that famous hall in the Strand where once stood Cross's menagerie, and where lions roared and Chunee, the great elephant, routed and trumpeted and rang the bell for cakes!

There are other kinds of May meetings, too, going on, and the racing world is astir and rattling away to Kempton, to Newmarket, or Epsom. And with opera in full swing, and theatres doing their best to tempt people away from country or suburban pleasures, it is hard to say whether it is better to spend Mayday in town or in some rural solitude with the cuckoo to welcome it in, or more welcome still, the first notes of the nightingale, for

The liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill
Portend success in love;

and that is an affair which, according to all poetic authority, is especially congenial to Mayday or, indeed, to any other day in the month; although, curiously enough, ancient superstition, continued to the present day, denounces May as particularly unlucky for marriages. But that is the only slur on the character of the month which for all other purposes should be the best and brightest of the year.

"OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER luncheon Hope went to Mr. Egerton's room. Mrs. Page opened the door. She had been in the family since she was a girl, and in times of sickness or trouble her mistress preferred to have her

in attendance in place of the smart French maid.

"She knows about last night, miss," Mrs. Page whispered to Hope as she entered. "You guessed, I suppose——"

"Yes—he's safe?"

"So far; but we daren't go to him, because of those men." She went over to the couch where her mistress was lying. "Miss Brown, ma'am. She will help us, I know!"

Mrs. Egerton's sad face lightened at the sight of the girl.

Hope was shocked at the change in her. Apart from the dreadful events of the last few hours, the task of keeping up all her social duties, which her husband had imposed on her during the past three months, had told on her. Her strength, already strained to the utmost, had broken down completely under this last blow.

"You will not betray him!" she pleaded. "He is dreadfully hurt, perhaps dying, and none of us dare go to him. That dreadful man Dornton is watching every one of us, and there are spies everywhere. There isn't a servant we can trust."

"Page and Gilbert did what they could for him last night. But"—a terrified look came into her tear-wet face—"Gilbert——"

"Oh! No! no!" exclaimed Hope, shocked at the terror in the mother's face. "He would never do that! Betray his——"

"No! I am sure he would not! But he is so hard! He is like his father in those things. But he thinks so much of the family's honour that he will keep silence—if only for that. But Mr. Egerton would give him up. He says that those who sin against the law must bear the consequences, and the better chances they have had the greater should be their punishment. He is so proud of the family's good name, and I know all this has nearly broken his heart."

"But——" the girl began indignantly.

"Hush! You mustn't say a word against Mr. Egerton. It has been all my fault. He has been very patient—and Wilfred—— But I am to blame. He was my first-born and I idolised him. I spoilt him! I would not listen to what his father said. If he punished him I thought he was harsh and unkind. But he and Wilfred never understood each other, and I know that Wilfred——"

Her tears fell fast as the long array of

her first-born son's sins and follies rose up before her.

"But he was not wicked!" she went on with passionate vehemence. "He was reckless, and high-spirited, and fond of pleasure; but he always loved me. Perhaps if his father had been more patient—but he grew tired of forgiving him at last, and was always comparing him with Gilbert. Gilbert was always a good son, while poor Wilfred——"

Hope flashed into revolt for the sake of the outcast son.

"The wildest sons sometimes turn out the best," she exclaimed, speaking from the wide experience of the school-room.

Mrs. Egerton shook her head. But the generous championship cheered her slightly. "He was very reckless; but I know he was good at heart; and he was going to turn over a new leaf. He had given me his solemn promise. I shall not forget that night. He stole into the house, one night a year ago, when his father was away. Just think of it, Hope! He was pale, and thin, and cold! He had been hungry! He laughed about it as he sat warming his hands at the fire, just as he used to laugh when, a schoolboy, he would come in from his riding or football! But I couldn't laugh. It hurt me so to see him want while we were living in luxury. And that night, before he slipped away again like a thief out of his own father's house, he promised me to lead a better life! And then that awful thing happened!"

Hope, being in the school-room at the time, had heard nothing of it, though every paper had been full of it. The topic had naturally been avoided by the Egertons' friends and acquaintances, and during the short time she had associated with them, Hope had only heard hints of Wilfred Egerton having recently crowned his reckless career by getting himself mixed up in a very disgraceful affair.

"He is innocent! He is shielding some one!" flushing faintly as she met the girl's pure eyes. "He is chivalrous and generous. He broke his bail for that. It looks dreadful and disgraceful, I know. But I am certain he only ran away, and keeps in hiding, to shield—some one else——"

"May I come in, mother?"

The two started as they heard Gilbert at the door.

He glanced at them both with a rather curious look on his face as he entered.

"Gilbert!" his mother exclaimed eagerly. "Hope will do what we want, I know."

And before he could speak she had told the girl her reason for sending for her.

Some one must make an effort to reach Wilfred; none of themselves dared venture. They felt that Dornton was keeping too close a watch on them. Mrs. Page, as an old family servant, and one who had been devoted to the fugitive, was evidently also under his supervision. At any moment he might ask to speak with one of them; while Mr. Egerton, who was also kept ignorant of his son's hiding-place, made the matter still more difficult. As a last resource, Mrs. Egerton and Mrs. Page had thought of Hope. Her conduct that morning had roused Mrs. Page's confidence.

Mrs. Egerton asked her now to go and see Wilfred, and carry to him any necessities that he might want.

It was plain that Gilbert, for some reason or other, was strongly opposed to the plan. But for want of finding a better, he said nothing, while his mother eagerly explained to Hope the arrangements they had made. Perhaps he had seen the uselessness of opposing the mother's blind love.

Hope acquiesced eagerly.

"Oh, let me go!" she exclaimed. "I am sure I can manage it. Mr. Egerton!" turning with an impulsive movement to him, "do you think I can't be trusted?"

His eyes darkened, and once again she caught a glimpse of that merciless sternness which had transformed him the night before.

"You should not go if I could help it," he said slowly and distinctly.

A little pleading cry broke from his mother.

"Oh, Gilbert! How unjust you are! Let her go!"

He moved away. Hope, full of indignation and scorn, turned back to Mrs. Egerton for further directions.

"You must go to Page. You know the housekeeper's room, don't you?" said Mrs. Egerton. "She will show you what you are to do." Then, as if some reluctance conquered for a moment the selfishness of the mother's love: "You aren't afraid, dear? It is a dark and dismal way enough. I wouldn't send you if I had any one else."

Young Egerton turned sharply.

Hope, her face a little paler, but her eyes brave and shining, smiled back into

the troubled, pleading face of the mother. The sweet grace of her girlishness, that look on her face, even the white daintiness of her pretty morning frock, all produced so strange an effect on the young man as she stood there waiting to be sent, because "there was no one else," that he stalked over to the window, and staring out of it, employed the next few seconds swearing vehemently, but inaudibly, at the situation in general.

No man likes to feel that circumstances are beating him, and that is precisely what Mr. Gilbert Egerton was feeling at this moment.

Hope wasted no time; she hurried away to the housekeeper's room, which, with the kitchen offices and the servants' rooms, lay in the east wing of the house. There was a back staircase, and Hope, thinking it safer, though Gilbert told her that at this moment Dornton was in the grounds, chose it as the safest to use. She met no one on her way to it. The servants were probably all lingering over their dinner in the servants' hall, taking advantage, as they usually do, of the unexpected.

But just as she came to the staircase she caught sight of Dornton leisurely descending it. He had reached the narrow landing half-way down, and as she came through the swing-door leading to the head of the staircase she could see him distinctly. She drew back hastily, holding the green-baize-covered door that it should not swing to, and rouse him to the fact of her presence.

But he went on slowly down the staircase, not looking up, and she did not think he could have seen her.

Happily the door swung noiselessly on its hinges, and she had opened it cautiously.

But what was he doing here in the house when Gilbert Egerton had been so certain he was out of doors? Her blood ran cold at the thought of his ubiquitous presence, and then rushed, hot and passionate again, through her veins, at the idea of his prying—his insolent assumption that he could go where he would in the house. It was incredible that Mr. Egerton could permit it! She listened till he was out of sight and hearing, then crept to the staircase, and cautiously descended.

When she reached the wide, stone-flagged corridor below she waited again, looking carefully up and down it.

The hot afternoon sunlight was falling

into the corridor through a wide-open door at the end. Through this door she could see a lavender-bordered pathway of the kitchen garden. He had probably left the house again. With thankful heart she ran on to the housekeeper's room, which was near the opposite end.

As she disappeared into it, one of the various doors which opened on to the corridor was gently pulled ajar, and the detective peered out.

"Now, why was she so anxious that I should not see her?" he asked. Then, with a quick frown: "It is a shame. She is too sweet a little girl to be dragged into any affair with which Mr. Wilfred Egerton has to do."

CHAPTER VII.

THE housekeeper's room was a large, spare apartment, comfortably furnished with massive, old-fashioned furniture. It was always cool in here, even on the hottest summer day, screened as it was by the end of a thick shrubbery, between which and one of the windows ran only a narrow, gravelled pathway. There were two windows in the room, both opening almost to the ground, with broad seats running round them.

The gravelled path outside, passing under the windows, led through the shrubbery to the old bowling-green.

The windows were open, but the blinds were drawn down as if to keep out the hot sunshine. And arranged as they were, with the curtains drawn a little more forward than usual, no one could possibly see into the room from the outside, while any attempt to raise or move the blinds would be quickly detected from the room itself.

Mrs. Page, looking very anxious, awaited her. She had made ready a small basket, packed with every possible necessary.

She gave a few rapid instructions to Hope. Then going to the door opened it and looked out. There was no one in sight. She closed and locked it quickly and noiselessly—she had herself oiled the lock and hinges.

"He frightens me to death, that Mr. Dornton," she whispered to Hope. "I feel as if he sees and hears everything." Then she peeped out of the windows. There was no one on the path outside.

"It's not much of a place, miss, but there's no danger. I'll see that you aren't kept down there a moment longer than is necessary."

She was not wasting a moment. As she spoke, she moved an arm-chair that stood in one of the corners of the room near the window, and raised a piece of the carpet, which, heavy and thick, had originally come from one of the reception-rooms.

The floor was parqueted, each diagonal slab of wood laid so beautifully that the surface was like one polished sheet. But as Hope watched, the housekeeper touched a spring so cunningly hidden in one of the panels of the high wainscoting round the room, that a man not knowing the secret might have searched days and weeks, and even then would probably have failed to find it, and a piece of the parqueting rose slowly in a block of about two yards square, leaving below it a space sufficient for a person, crouching very low, to pass under it.

Hope, eager and wondering, began to feel that a girl needed a good deal of courage to take part in a scene which might have come out of one of those old romances—delight of her school-days—where secret staircases and chambers had played so important a rôle in the domestic economy of the heroines' lives.

The raised slab left bare a deep cavity which looked something like a round bricked well. A very slender iron ladder, rusty with age, led down to a narrow passage about seven feet below the floor of the room, disappearing, two yards farther on, into an archway built apparently into the foundation wall of the house itself. A breath of rotting, mouldy air floated up to the room above, and the girl, peering down with eager curiosity, drew back, afraid for the first time. It curdled the blood in her veins as if she had suddenly found herself touched by the decaying hand of some dead thing.

But as she caught the alarmed look on the housekeeper's face she made haste to reassure her.

"I shall go," she said, forcing a laugh, "only you see I'm not quite used to these mysterious passages."

"I don't half like sending you," said the housekeeper reluctantly; "and Mr. Gilbert was mad about it, but there——"

She broke off and proceeded to direct Hope as to her proceedings.

"You can't really come to harm, miss!" she said, after giving a few careful but hurried directions, for she dreaded every minute to hear the detective at the door. "You needn't be gone more than half an hour—come back sooner if you can. I

shall be waiting here, and will let you out. I shall be on the watch, and you must not give any signal in case any one but me might happen to be here. Whatever you do, miss, don't call or knock!"

Hope promised. Mrs. Page made her repeat the instructions, and then, throwing a big, dark cloak over her dress, she held the basket till Hope had crept through the opening and stood on the slender ladder. She handed down the basket and a lantern which she had already lighted, and stood there looking till Hope reached the bottom. The girl stood for a second by the archway to smile back bravely at the anxious woman watching her. She was holding the lantern so that its rays touched her face, and Mrs. Page seemed to become suddenly aware, for the first time, how very pretty the girl really was, and this discovery troubled her more now than the other thought of the dismal journey itself which Hope would have to make through that old, half-choked, subterranean passage. Hope nodded brightly up at her, then turned, and stooping, crept through the low stone archway and disappeared.

As she vanished Mrs. Page hastily let the slab of flooring slip back into its place, turned back the heavy carpet, replaced the arm-chair, even dropping a piece of her needlework on the floor by it as if she had just been sitting there at work.

She was a clever, practical woman, and her intelligence was quickened by her devotion to the family.

It was her intention, should any one appear immediately on the scene who had noticed Hope entering the room, to give them to understand that she had left it by one of the windows, through which it was easy to step on to the path outside. Hope had been confident that no one had seen her entering the room a few moments ago. But Mrs. Page felt that it was impossible to take too many precautions. The thought that some one might have been watching from the shrubbery, and would so contradict her statement, dismayed her somewhat. But she had made a slight

inspection of it a short time previously, and, as far as she could see, it had been clear.

Everything had been carried out so expeditiously, that she trusted Dornton had had no time to make any fresh arrangements. Hope had been in her room barely six or seven minutes.

When everything had been done, even to unlocking the door, Mrs. Page, still with that air of being perfectly absorbed in the carrying out of the details of her scheme, sat down at her writing-table at the other end of the room. It was pay-day for the servants, and she opened her book. But she suddenly flung down her pen. That troublesome consciousness of the girl's beauty had been with her all the time.

'Lord! Master Gilbert thinks his brother a devil, I do believe!' she exclaimed angrily to herself. "Even if poor Mr. Wilfred should ever get well, which I doubt, I am sure he would never——"

The sentence was not finished.

There came a gentle knocking at the door.

Mrs. Page went pale; then after a second's pause made a violent effort to speak quietly.

"Come in," she said, bending over her accounts.

The door opened, and Dornton, smiling and cheerful, entered.

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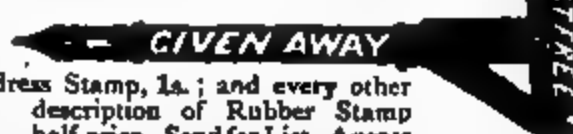
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
A Vallant Ignorance. A Serial		"Outlawed." A Short Serial	
Story ... 409, 433, 457, 481		428, 452, 476, 500	
To Chalfont and Milton's		"Coyote Hunting." A Western	
Cottage ... 414		Sketch ... 482	
The Joy of Work... 418		The Dinner-Hour ... 473	
My Own Petard. A Complete		The Opening of the Imperial	
Story ... 421		Institute ... 488	
Naval Misadventures ... 439		The Dancing Children of	
From Fairyland Onwards ... 444		Harricombe, A Complete Story 492	
Donegal Sketches ... 447, 467		A Wet Day among the Birds .. 497	

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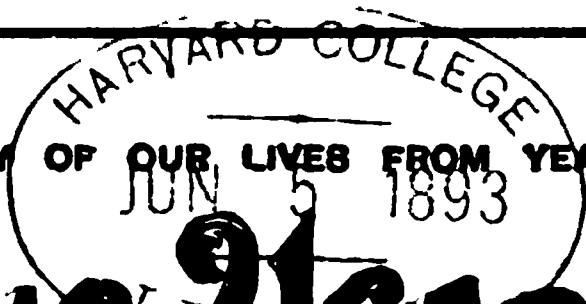
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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE hand crept round the clock, the swift November twilight fell, and still she did not move; only her clasped hands stretched themselves out as if in prayer. She was not praying though. The attitude was instinctive and unconscious; a blind, mute appeal. She was simply stunned. The room grew darker and darker until its only light was a ray from the street-lamp outside falling straight across the bowed head; and then there was a ring at the bell and a slow step upon the stairs. Clemence knew the step well, though she had never before heard it fall like that. As it fell upon her ear now, a strong shiver ran all through her, and her hands were drawn sharply to cover her face. The door was opened, and her face was pressed down still more tightly.

"Clemence! What, all in the dark? Why, Clemence——" The masterful, rather aggressively cheerful young voice stopped abruptly, and Julian Romaine stood still against the door he had closed behind him listening; listening to a low, pitiful sound, which seemed to fill the very air—the sound of a woman's heart-broken crying. At the first tone of his voice great scalding tears had started to Clemence's eyes suddenly and without warning; a low, choking sob had shaken her from head to foot, and she was crying now with the hopeless abandonment of suddenly loosened grief.

There was a moment during which

the only sound in the room was the sound of her low, quivering sobs. Julian stood quite still; on the first instant there leapt into his face such a look of fierce, vindictive anger as absolutely transformed it. The look faded slowly into a kind of bitter background, and a hard sullenness settled itself upon it—settled with some difficulty as it seemed, for his lips twitched a little. Then he advanced into the room and broke the silence, and the roughness in his tone seemed to defy something within himself. He made no attempt to light the gas. The lamp outside made it possible to move about, and apparently he did not care for further illumination.

"Come, Clemence," he said, "what's the matter?"

He had not approached her; on the contrary, he was on the other side of the room looking down at her across the lodging-house table. She did not raise her head or move as she replied—indeed, the choked, broken words were rather the expression of the mingled shame and pity with which she was crushed than a definite answer to his words.

"Oh, Julian! Julian! Julian!"

Apparently the tone of her voice affected him in spite of himself, for his face twitched again, and he spoke more harshly still.

"What's the matter, I say?"

She stretched her hands out to him across the table, still without lifting her face, in an unconscious gesture of appeal.

"Oh, don't!" she cried beseechingly and piteously. "Don't, dear. Don't pretend any more. I—I know!"

The hands thrust deep down into Julian's pockets were clenched fiercely, and his teeth were set together, with a look in his eyes which they had never held before.

"My mother?" he said.

She answered only with a slight shivering gesture, but it was enough. With his young face white to the lips with passionate resentment, Julian turned brusquely away and took two blind strides to the window, with a muttered oath.

There was a long silence. Julian stood at the window, staring blankly out into the darkness with hard eyes. Clemence was indeed, as she believed herself to be, his wife. How it had come about, how he had drifted into anything so far from his vague thoughts in his first meetings with her, he could not have said. What it was that had shaped and moulded his intention into something so much purer and more manly than his own nature, he only now and then felt faintly and indefinitely when he touched it, as he could touch it, rarely and densely, in the woman from whose higher nature it emanated. He had married her with that reckless carelessness for the future which seems almost abnormal, but which is not an uncommon characteristic of weakness, and now he was quite incapable of facing and enduring the legitimate consequences of his action. He had lied to his mother to save himself from the heavier penalty with which she threatened him, and his suggestion as to the possibility of his marrying the girl she believed him to have ruined, had been a miserable, consciously degraded attempt at cutting the Gordian knot. He had lied to his mother again, deliberately and without compunction, at their second interview, giving her a promise which he knew to be an empty form in his word to break with the girl who was his wife. He had come to Clemence to-day, intending to arrange for that temporary suspension of intercourse with her, which was inevitable as a blind to his mother, by telling her that he was obliged to go abroad immediately for an indefinite period.

Now as he stood there in the dark little room, with his eyes fixed on the solitary gas-lamp outside, he was gradually realising that it was all over. His mother had sent, had possibly come herself, to Clemence, he supposed, and Clemence had of course declared herself his wife. His plans were all upset. His carefully made calculations were no longer of any avail. It was all over. His brain gradually ceased to busy itself; he was staring darkly at penury, humiliation, ostracism—not thinking of them or feeling them, but just contemplating them with a stupid mental gaze.

Gradually a sense of his surroundings began to return to him. He became conscious that it was a street-lamp at which he was looking; that there was a dark little street before him; that there was a dim room behind him; and then from that room a low sound came to him—faint, exhausted, long-drawn sobs, as of a woman who has wept herself into quiet. He began to listen for them and count them involuntarily. Then they began to hurt him; each one seemed to stick something into his heart. At last he walked across almost mechanically, and laid his hand tentatively on her shoulder.

"It's all right, Clemence!" he said huskily. "It's all right, dear. After all, you know, you are my wife all right." He was conscious of a vague idea that it was the supposition he had allowed that had cut her so cruelly.

There was another moment's pause, and then Clemence slowly lifted her head and looked at him for the first time. Her face was white and exhausted-looking with her tears, and her eyes, luminous and inexpressibly mournful, seemed to look through the pale, good-looking young features above her into the poor cramped soul they hid. "I?" she said. "What does it matter about me, Julian? It's you! Oh, my dear, my dear, it's you!"

"It—it's awkward!" returned Julian gloomily; his consciousness of the prospect before him seemed to quicken and writhe at what he supposed to be her realisation of it. "It's loss of everything practically, of course. One will be cut right and left, and where money is to come from——"

He was interrupted by a low cry. Clemence had drawn a little back as though to see him better, and was looking up at him with her delicate eyebrows drawn together in intense, painful perplexity and wonder.

"Oh, Julian!" she said, and her low voice had for the first time a ring of reproach in it. "Oh, Julian, it isn't that, dear! It isn't that! What does that matter?"

"What does it matter?" echoed Julian with an angry laugh. Her words, in the total want of comprehension, the total incapacity for sympathy with his position to which they witnessed, seemed to him to throw into sudden, glaring relief the class distinction which lay between them; and the sense of it came upon him, jarring and overwhelming, like an earnest of all he had done for himself. "It matters a good

deal, let me tell you, Clemence. It matters—as you can't understand, you know! It matters just everything!"

"But—compared!" she said in a low, quick tone, a bright, pained light in her eyes. "I know—I know, of course, that there is a great deal I can't understand. But—compared!"

"Compared with what, in Heaven's name?" said Julian angrily.

"Compared with—yourself, Julian!" she cried, laying a tender, clinging touch on his arm. "Compared with your own truth! Oh, don't you know it's that, it's only that that has been so dreadful to me—that made me feel as if my heart was breaking! It's thinking that you've been false, dear! That you've said what's not true, acted what's not true! Oh, it's that that I can't bear for you, my dear, my dear!"

He stood looking down, not at her face, but at the worn, trembling hand holding his in such a clasp of love and shame—shame for him as he vaguely felt; suspended between wrath and a certain cold, creeping feeling which he could not analyse, but which seemed to be gradually turning him into a horrible shadow. It was as an involuntary, unwilling concession to this feeling, as one might throw a sop to an on-coming all-threatening monster, that he muttered awkwardly:

"I—I'm sorry I deceived you, Clemence."

"Deceived me!" There was an emphasis on the pronoun which seemed to lift her far above him in its absolute, unconscious, self-abnegation. "Me! Oh, it isn't that! It doesn't matter who it is or how many people it is! It's the thing itself. It's the meaning to yourself, and—and Heaven above! Julian, dear, you believe in Heaven above, don't you?" Clemence's creed was very simple; the attitude of the spirit which "Heaven above" had given her was not an affair of many words. "You know it's oneself that matters. It isn't what one has or the friends one has that make the difference—they're not anything really. It's oneself!"

She paused a moment, but he did not speak. He was still looking heavily down at the hand on his arm, and she went on again, her voice trembling with earnestness.

"Julian, there's that at the bottom of everything in all kinds of life! It doesn't matter whether one's rich or poor, it

doesn't matter whether people think well of us—we can't always make them, and we can't all be rich. But we can all be good, dear. Heaven means us all to be good, don't you think? Oh, if it didn't, if it wasn't that that mattered most of all down at the bottom, what would the world come to be like? And why should anybody go on living!"

Julian Romaine was very young. Far down in his nature; in that awful inextricable tangle which, because it is so awful and so far beyond our reach, man struggles so insanely to reduce to our poor little level, to define, and label, and explain away, but which remains in spite of him a mystery of God; there was that strange affinity for noble thoughts and things which is the sign manual of His part in man, never wholly withdrawn by its Creator from the earth. It is in the young that that instinctive affinity is most easily reached and touched, and the simple, ignorant, unworldly words—words which could have touched in Julian no reasoning powers—were the medium which reached it now. Clemence had reached it more than once or twice before, and its feeble stirring in response had quickened it, and rendered it in some poor and infinitesimal degree sensitive to her touch. He drew his arm sharply from those clinging, pleading hands, and turned away, leaning his arm on the mantelpiece so that she could not see his face. That cold, creeping feeling which seemed to sap all his reality had stolen over his whole personality, and he was held numb and paralysed in the clutch of an all-dominating question. Was it really as she said? His own life, his own world had faded into shadows as of a very dream. Strange, distorted shapes, conceptions so new to him that they wore a weird and ghostly air of unreality, seemed to be rising round him, pressing him into nothingness. Was it as she said? He did not speak, and after a moment Clemence went on; very tenderly, very delicately, as though in her intense sympathy and feeling for the suffering she ascribed to him by intuition, she dreaded to hurt him further; diffidently and with difficulty, because she was so little used to clothing in words all that to her was most real and vital in life.

"You—you must think of the future, dear. I know—I know that you can hardly bear to look at the past, but it—it is past! It hasn't been you, really! I know it can't have been! And—it will wear out of your life at last, dear, by—by

truth. You will tell your mother that we are married"—a scarlet, agonising colour dyed her face for an instant—"perhaps you have told her already? And perhaps, perhaps she will forgive you! If not—why if not, perhaps she—the pain will help to wear it out, my dearest."

Her voice and the expression of the sweet, white face she lifted to him had changed subtly as she spoke. Her great pity and sorrow for him had developed a strange, new phase in her love for him. It had become tenderer, deeper. She had lost her reverence for him, but her love had triumphed over the loss, and through the pain and victory it had won higher ground, and become the love of sympathy and consolation.

But Julian hardly heard her last words. His attention had stopped, as it were, at those preceding them:

"You will tell your mother that we are married!"

Had Clemence not told, then? Was it possible that she had not mentioned it; that his mother did not know even now; that there was still—hope?

The thought arrested the current of his thoughts in an instant. The possibilities the thought suggested; all the tangible, definite advantages it held; swept over those faintly quickened perceptions in a sudden wave of excitement, numbing them on the instant. The things which had been realities to him as long as he had had any consciousness, took to themselves substance once again and pressed about him. Life and the world resumed their normal complexion, and he lifted his head quickly and turned.

"Do you mean—have you seen my mother? Whom have you seen? Do you mean that you have said nothing?"

There was a pause as Clemence looked at him for a moment confused and startled, it seemed, by his manner. There was a wonderful, unconscious touch of dignity in her gentle manner as she answered:

"I never thought of it!"

"Was it my mother?"

"No; a gentleman."

Julian moved abruptly with a low exclamation, and began to walk rapidly up and down the little room absorbed in eager thought. Clemence watched him with a puzzled, surprised look in her eyes, and a little touch of reserve creeping over her face. At last he stopped suddenly and began to speak, looking anywhere but on her face.

"Look here, Clemence, I'm afraid this sounds an awfully blackguardly thing to suggest, but you'll see it's necessary. It won't do for me to tell my mother just yet. To tell you the truth she is frightfully set against my marrying. I am done for all round as soon as she knows, and it would be just cutting our own throats to tell her—yet, you know. You see," he went on hurriedly, evidently anxious to prevent her speaking, "you see, as I am I've got very good prospects. In a few years, if all goes well, I shall be making heaps of money at the bar—a fellow that is well known, you know, can always get on—and then it will be all right and simple. Meanwhile, you see, I have plenty of money, and we can be together almost as much as we like, quietly, you know. Whereas if we burst it all up now we shall just starve and be out of it all our lives. Don't you see?"

He stopped awkwardly, but for the moment he had no answer. Clemence had listened to him, the expression of her face changing from wonder to incredulity, from incredulity to agony, from agony to the look of a creature stricken to death. She lifted her hand in the silence slowly and heavily to her head. Julian saw the gesture, though he could not see her face, and its heaviness somehow increased his discomfort.

"You see it's only common sense!" he said impatiently.

"You mean that you want to go on living a double life—that you don't want, don't mean to try to do right!" The voice was not like the voice of the Clemence he knew. It was low, distinct, and stern, and she spoke very slowly.

"I mean that I don't want to ruin myself out of hand!" he said harshly.

"Don't be foolish, Clemence!"

"Ruin!" she said in the same tone. "You don't know what real ruin means! I don't know how to make you understand; I'm not clever enough; but I can tell you just this! I would rather die than have it as you say. For your sake, not for my own only, I would rather die. Until your mother knows the truth I won't even see you or speak to you again. As to taking a penny of your money I would starve first."

Her tone, vibrating with intensity of meaning, was quite low. She was not declaiming or protesting. She was simply making her stand at a proposition so terrible to her that it had carried her

beyond the bounds of emotion. For the moment Julian was startled and aghast.

"You don't mean that!" he said. "Clemence, that's nonsense!"

"It's truth!" she said steadily. "You must choose!"

She was standing facing him, her slight figure erect and straight as he had never seen it. Her face was white as death, and set into strange, fine lines quite new to it; all the weak softness about her mouth was being gradually pressed out as the latent strength developed, as it seemed, with every breath she drew. It was as though the crisis, in its sudden demand upon her forces, was transforming her as she grappled with it; transforming her into a woman before whom Julian felt himself shrink into utter contemptibility. He took the only means he knew to reassert himself, and lost his temper deliberately.

"Well, then, I do choose!" he cried violently. "You're a foolish girl, who doesn't understand, Clemence, and by-and-by you'll own I was right! As to not taking my money, that's absurd, you know! You must! But I'm not going to ruin both of us for absurd fancies!"

He stopped, hoping she would answer and give him some advantage, but she stood silent, gazing at him with stern, searching eyes, as though she were trying in vain to reconcile the man before her with the man she loved. Julian felt her gaze though he could not see it, and he went on hotly, trying, as it were, to gather round him the rags of his old authority and superiority.

"You don't suppose, Clemence," he said, "that I propose this because I like it? It's not a nice thing for a man to propose to his wife, I can tell you. I should have hoped you would have understood that. But after all it's only for a time, and it won't make any real difference to you—things will be just as they have been. And if you can't feel about it as I do, you must remember it's because you've got a great deal to learn still, and you must believe that what I say is right. Anyway, you're my wife, you know, and you're bound to obey me!"

"I'm bound to obey you in all things that it's right you should ask. But I'm not bound to do what would be dragging you down and me too. I can't make you do what's right; it wouldn't do you any good for me to tell your mother; but until you do, it will be as I said."

"Then it's you who part us," he

cried passionately. "You don't love me, Clemence! You can't ever have loved me!"

There was a moment's pause, and then her answer came in a strange, still voice.

"I do love you!" she said. "I love you so that I would give my life to blot out what you've said!"

A dead silence—a silence in which Julian Romaine seemed to feel something pulling and straining at his heart-strings. Then with a reckless, desperate effort he tore himself away from its influence and spoke.

"It can't be helped, then," he said fiercely and defiantly. "You must go your own way until you come to your senses! Some day, perhaps, you'll be grateful to me for refusing to make fools of us! I wouldn't have believed it of you, Clemence! You make me almost sorry that I ever saw you. Now, look here; I've put it to you from every point of view; I've tried as hard as ever I can to make you understand, and if you won't, you won't! As to the money, of course, I can't hear of your not taking that. I shall send you so much regularly every month—it won't be very much either, but it'll be enough to keep you—and, of course, you'll have to spend it. But you need not be afraid that I shall want to see you again until you come to a more sensible frame of mind."

He waited, but again there was no answer, and again some influence from her still presence discomfited him, and made him hurry on.

"I'm going now!" he said roughly. "Good-bye, Clemence!" He made a movement as though to go, without a tenderer farewell, but quite suddenly his heart failed him. He turned again and took her into his arms impulsively and tenderly. "Clemmie!" he said brokenly. "I say—Clemmie!"

Her arms were round his neck pressing him closely and more closely, with a desperate, agonised pressure, and a long, clinging kiss was on his cheek.

"Don't keep me waiting long," she whispered hoarsely. "You will do it at last. I know, I know you will. But—don't keep me waiting long!"

She released him and drew herself gently out of his arms, and Julian turned and stumbled out of the room and down the stairs, the most consciously contemptible young man in London, and with no strength to act upon his consciousness.

In the darkness of the room he left Clemence had fallen on her knees against a chair, and was crying blindly over and over again, burning tears streaming all unregarded over her upturned face, her voice choked and strangled with her sobs: "Our Father which art in Heaven! Our Father! Our Father!"

TO CHALFONT AND MILTON'S COTTAGE.

ALTHOUGH not exactly an undiscovered country, that awaits its Columbus, and familiar enough on paper, somehow to those who inhabit London the pleasant hilly country of the Chilterns has hitherto been practically unknown. But now that the whole region is accessible from any station of the Metropolitan Railway, with trains every two hours from Baker Street, and vice versa, there is no cause for neglecting it any longer, and one pleasant morning of this phenomenal springtide finds us all at Willesden Green awaiting the "Aylesbury express." A feature in the country station of to-day, is the prevalence of the "ancien militaire" who has exchanged his red coat for the velveteen of the railway service. Sundry comrades, too, have settled in the neighbourhood, disabled men and pensioners who will hobble down between whiles to have a crack about this and the other. "Is it Tom ye mean?" cries the busy porter, between intervals of slamming doors and chanting the rubric of the station. "Didn't I carry his portmanty the other day when he gone out with the volunteers — quartermaster-sergeant with the forty-sixth Middlesex? And Jack Sanders is running a little milk-shop over yonder. And Higgins—yes, I see Higgins while ago. Now for the Aylesbury train, Harrow, Chalfont Road, and Chesham."

The train that bustles up is a clean and cheerful little affair, with quite a different expression about it from the murky, gloomy Underground train, and yet bearing a kind of family likeness. And the passengers, how different from the pallid, anxious-looking crowd who whirl round and round in the charmed circle of sulphurous existence down below there! Our passengers are cheery, conversible country people, or, anyhow, if there are Londoners they were country bred. One remembers gathering cowslips in such a hollow when she was a girl—an epoch not very far removed, yet now there is a semi-

circle of smart villas about the place. Also we have on board some members of what seems to be a kind of "Old Boys' Club," the cheeriest and liveliest possible, whose object seems to be to take slashing walks in company to all kinds of pleasant places, and generally to chaff each other and tell stories on the way. The handsome tower of Pinner Church with the tall cross at the top, suggests to one of these modern Pickwicks the veracious story of a man who is buried—you can't say interred—in a stone coffin "en plein jour," in the churchyard; the object being to secure the title of some neighbouring estate, which is good only as long as its former possessor is "above ground." The tale itself, perhaps, is not exactly humorous, but it pleases us all very much, and when the Pickwicks depart at the next station for a walk over the downs, we all agree that these are the right sort of people to travel with.

We are now among the downs—you perceive a rolling chalk country—and in one of its great hollows lies Rickmansworth, which some say should be Rickmeresworth, and there are stories of a great mere, now mostly drained away, where untold riches lie, waiting for the lucky discoverer. The mere we can well believe in, for the vale has a wet and watery appearance, with streams and links of ponds which might easily be turned into a lake again. The town itself is pervaded with brewers' drays and farmers' waggons—a snug little town with red lichen-covered roofs, from which rises the squat tower of the church, with its tall wooden spire. Moor Park is close at hand, once a Royal seat and a favourite resort of Cardinal Wolsey, and at Chorley Wood, further on, which is not a forest as you might expect, but a fine open common, a field-path will take you across to Chenies and Latimers, the former the first acquisition of the Russels, when they started on the track that led to all their wealth and honour. Thence they sprang and thither they return, for it is the family burial-place. But Chalfont Road is our destination, a name which has no deceptive meaning attached to it, for there is the white road on the rolling chalk plateau, with nothing in the way of village or houses to distract the attention. The railway porter indicates the way with metropolitan brevity: "First to the right and second to the left." A countryman a little further on is less sparing of words: "Now you go right on till you come to a saign-post. You leuk at that; that'll tell you."

The sign-post is there, and duly points the way to Chalfont St. Giles. But it is a very dusty way, and a man is driving a young horse to and fro, and raises the dust in clouds. Happily there is everywhere a field-path to be found in this country, and in a few minutes we are on a nice country path that leads along a hedgerow, where wild flowers are sprinkled here and there.

On either hand stretch great ploughed fields with a sort of misty green about them, where the young wheat—or it may be barley, or, perhaps, oats—is freshly springing. A great horse-roller is being driven over the clods with a ringing noise, and there is a confused twitter and warbling of birds, but the tranquillity of Nature pervades everything, and a bronzed old labourer asleep in the hedge-bank is a picture of contented repose. A copse where the delicate green is spangled with white blossoms, and the flank of a gently swelling down, enclose the restful, simple scene. Then the path leads by a big, rambling homestead with orchards and pastures intermixed, where cattle are feeding, and the bees humming among the plum blossom. Next the path drops us upon a sunken road pleasantly shaded by trees that overhang some well-weathered park palings, and from the copse you hear the pheasants calling, and the whirr of wings, and a general cheeping and clucking. The big house within the park palings is the Vache, a curious name, as to the origin of which archæological pandits give conflicting accounts. The road now dips unmistakeably to the valley, and is bordered by a pleasant avenue, forming a charming vista ending in a pleasant roadside inn, the "Pheasant," of ancient renown, where a team of horses and a tilted waggon drawn up before the door, and a light cart or two, attended by an ancient hostler with a bucket, give us a glimpse of the life of other days.

The "Pheasant" proves worthy of its ancient fame, as far as a ripe Cheddar, a pat of yellow butter, a home-made loaf, and a fair white cloth can testify. The inn parlour is of the good old style, with glimpses from its windows of the white road, and there is a pleasant murmur of voices from the bar, where the driver of the tilted waggon and the light cart men are refreshing the inner man. "Ah, this fine weather," says the landlord, who is just what the landlord of such a house should be, "brings people out, but a good many

come this way most times. There's some go to see Milton's Cottage, and that's just at the end of the village street; but there's more even go the other way, to Jordons, Americans nearly all, and they go to Jordons because their great man, Mr. Penn, was buried there."

Now Jordons is in the parish of Chalfont St. Peter, and some miles away, and is an old Quaker burying-ground, where rest the bones of a good many old Quaker worthies. Isaac Pennington, of the Grange, for one, the indirect cause of this day's pilgrimage. For it was through Pennington that Elwood the Quaker came to know John Milton, whom he had served as reader and amanuensis—not for gain, but for self-improvement—and it was Elwood who, at Milton's request, found for him a cottage in the country in 1665, when the pestilence was waxing hot in the City.

But as for the founder of Pennsylvania, although not grudging to the Americans their hero, he does not inspire us with much interest. Now we are for St. Giles his village, which is within a bow-shot of the "Pheasant," crossing a little river, which in its sparkle and brightness may vie with the most famous streams of old or modern story. It is the English Meuse, for once, doubtless, it bore that name, and had it had the good luck to run its course in Scotland it might have been as famous as the Yarrow, and have had half-a-dozen poets to flatter it. But being only an English stream the charms of its bright course pass unnoticed: the hue which it borrows from the sky, its crystal clearness, the pleasant murmur that it makes in a thirsty land. Beyond the stream lies the village, as sweetly placed as an English village can be, a shallow backwater from the river forming a setting for the village green, the scattered cottages, some quaint and some commonplace, and the square tower of the church, with a solemn kind of shadow over it, rising above the lowly roofs.

The way in which the village closely surrounds the church is characteristic of these settlements of the Beechings—if you like to assign that name to the early inhabitants of Buckinghamshire, who are not agriculturists at all, except by the force of circumstances, but are of a race addicted to handicrafts of all kinds, cunning workers in wood and in all kinds of light materials, in lace, in net or straw-plait, or anything that comes to hand.

Before the iron age of machinery they lived and prospered fairly well, and for them were built these substantial cottages, with stout oaken beams framing the red-brick walls, and supporting the heavy red-tiled roofs. Under this row of ancient cottages is the lych-gate of the church—a gateway framed in massive oaken timbers, and all shaded and sombre within, but showing beyond, in a patch of bright sunshine, the green churchyard and grey tombstones. The wicket that closes the gateway is a charming and probably unique example of an old turnpike—a great oaken beam on end, pivoted at top and bottom, with a big grooved wheel at top, and below a double gate, and, doubtless, at one time a heavy weight attached to the pulley kept the wicket firmly shut against ponies, donkeys, pigs, and all stray animals.

The church door is open. Here is a handsome little Early English church, arches and pillars gleaming white in the dim, religious light, with tombs and monuments showing here and there, and the perfume of spring flowers lingering about the place, for altar and font—a grand old monolith of a font—are adorned with lilies and foliage for the Easter festival. Gardyners and Fleetwoods were the old families of the parish, whose brasses and sepulchral monuments are in evidence. All were good Parliament men about here, and the last of the Fleetwoods lost that pleasant demesne of the Vache, his ancient heritage, for sitting in judgement on King Charles the First, and would have lost his head too, at the Restoration, had he not escaped to America. A tablet to an earlier Fleetwood gives the names of a fine family of girls—Sibill, Bridget, Ann, Elizabeth, Honoria, and Joyce—names which seem to tell of varied influences and distinctive characters, entailing strange romantic histories. One or two may have been sweet, calm old maids when the eminent Mr. John Milton came to live at Chalfont.

Now up the village street, where there are several old houses which were not exactly new in Milton's time. There are evidences, too, that the village is not without a share in the movements of the period. A dairy school shows a laudable effort to restore the former fame of the Buckinghamshire milk-pails. But here, at the very end of the village street, is an old house with broad, massive chimney-stacks and tiled roof, and a gabled front in timber and plaster, with a not too liberal allowance of diamond-paned windows. Nothing

about the house, perhaps, has changed very much since Milton came there when the plague was raging in London. A pleasant-looking woman is doing some washing in an adjoining outhouse, and wipes the suds from her hands to come and usher the way into Milton's dwelling. A studious-looking little room on the right with a diamond-paned window overlooking the garden was probably the poet's study; the larger room on the other side of the passage would be the dining-parlour or general living-room. Milton's room is now a kind of museum of memorials of the great poet, early editions of his works, engraved portraits of him at various ages—he was strikingly handsome as a youth, with long, flowing locks, and anything but the air of a precisian; in age his face is noble if austere. Here, in this little room, we see him in his blindness, his high ambition brought to this humble obscurity.

Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves,

his friends proscribed and exiled, the best of them torn to pieces on the scaffold; and yet "bating no jot of heart or hope," but putting the finishing touches here in this little room, to which the thought brings a kind of sanctity as if it were a temple, to the great epic

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree.

I don't know that we feel much gratitude to friend Elwood for suggesting "Paradise Regained," which Milton is said to have written while at Chalfont; it is such a terrible fall from the other, and shows that great poets should be chary of accepting suggestions from well-intentioned friends. It is quite enough for us that "Paradise Lost" was finished in this little room.

Yet this cottage of Milton's, as interesting in its way as Shakespeare's birthplace, does not bring this way any great crowd of pilgrims such as visit the shrine of Stratford-on-Avon. Probably because Milton's personality is not so sympathetic as that of the other bard—

Dear son of memory, great heir of fame.

And again, Milton is unfashionable, his ethics are not of our age; and women who might otherwise adore him are repelled by his harsh judgements of the sex, and indignant at the inferior position he assigns them in his scheme of Nature. Yet a considerable number of people do visit Milton's cottage, and from all the county round, rather than from distant parts, although a

few names from America and the Colonies are scattered in the Visitors' Book.

Is there anything more to be seen? "Well, here's a table belongs to it," replies the custodian, pointing out a carved table in the keeping-room. Not warranted as Milton's table, however, but of the period. But the old oak treads are there of the narrow staircase leading to the bed-chambers, and the presence of the blind, majestic poet seems to haunt the place, and we may fancy that we hear his hesitating step upon the stairs.

But illusion does not last long in the cheerful sunshine, and now we are for Amersham, which is a short four miles distant, but not by that dusty, chalky highway on the other side of the river. There is a field-path, surely. "Yes," says an old gentleman in tattered velveteen, who is lounging in the trunk of a tree by the smithy door, from which the ring of the blacksmith's hammer sounds harmoniously, "keep along till you come to the gate." Actually the gate opens and there are no bramble-bushes twined about the bars, as is the hospitable custom of other parts of the country. The little track, like a clue of silver thread, winds along the meadows; the river comes wimpling down the broad green valley; the hills rise in soft outline on either hand. Now there is a mill with a sparkling pond above it, and a water-splash below, whence comes a pleasant but thirst-inspiring murmur of waters. Now a horseman comes riding down from the summit of the hill by some unseen bridle-track; he crosses the meadows, and goes splashing through the ford and away over the hill on the other side. He might be some young squire riding off to join his neighbour Hampden on his march to Chalgrove Field.

There are cowslips springing by the way—and nobody with a knife to dig them up by the root. Birds innumerable are scattered over the ploughed fields as plentifully as the stones in the furrows, and the hedgerows are full of them—of the birds, that is—and all are singing and twittering their level best, except such as are wailing and whimpering in wild, uneasy notes. The stream looks a nice one to fish. "Any trout, Mr. Miller?" "Plenty," says the miller sententiously. "But first you've got to get permission to catch 'em, and then you've got to catch 'em."

Mile after mile the meadow path runs on, and then a turn of the vale reveals a warm cluster of dwellings, and a church

tower that rises with almost cathedral dignity against the clear-cut line of hills.

Through a farmyard we enter Amersham, just a drowsy old-world market town, with inns galore. There is a "Swan" which is a very picture of an old coaching-house, and a sturdy seventeenth-century brick market-place, jutting out upon the High Street, a kind of "halle" below among the massive brick columns, and above a clock turret and town-hall, where poachers are fined, and people who leave their donkey-carts by the wayside. Here again the Beechings have built as close as they could get to the church all round, and with rudimentary drainage prevailing, the result is odoriferous. Therefore we will take the church for granted, as large and handsome, with some fine monuments in chancel or votive chapel, and follow where the town runs on in pleasant irregularity. What rows of quaint little brick houses, genteel with white steps and bright windows, and equally quaint cottages with timber and brickwork intermixed! What fine chimney-stacks, too; which it seems to be a point of honour to continue up to date! Here is a handsome, substantial old house that shades off gradually into an old mill, with its water-wheel over the stream, our bright little Meuse, which sparkles as brightly as ever behind the cottage-gardens. The murmur of the waters, with the cawing of rooks, the clucking of fowls, and the irrepressible twitter of small birds, forms a pleasant substitute for the rattle of vehicles and roar of traffic in the High Street of Amersham.

Going on a long, long way, the town ends gloriously in a fine old house, all gables, and porches, and noble bay-windows, enclosed within great red-brick walls, with gardens and beautiful fruit-trees in full bloom—a place to dream about. But this is not the big house. That is still further on—it is Shardeloes; and everything in Amersham leads up to Shardeloes.

Who taught that heaven-directed spire to rise? Why, Shardeloes, the babe, who is now grown up and 'prenticed to the hair-dresser, replies. Who built the almshouses in their shady Jacobean court? Who the market-house as a gift for the town? Some Sir George, or Sir William, or Sir Henry, but always of Shardeloes. And all the country round seems to culminate there. The hills gather together copse to copse, and hanging wood to hanging wood, till they join in wonderful sweeps of wooded glade and verdure, and

there is Shardeloes. The stream widens into a lake to reflect all this verdure and beauty, and the sturdy white façade—Adams built it, of the Adelphi, so you may judge that it is only beautiful from its surroundings.

But seeing the white gates hospitably open, and the footpaths over the velvet glades, and the seats agreeably placed where the views are best over valley and stream, and red roofs, and the soft reek from the town, here is a golden place to end the walk. The sun declining throws giant shadows of the trees across the green knolls, trees just bare enough to exhibit the noble framework of their branches, just enough in leaf to show the brightest golden green against the ruddy glow. And what a cawing and settling down of rooks among all the tall trees!

And now it is sharp to catch the Underground train. It seems strange to have to climb to the top of a mountain to reach our old Baker Street friend. But if the way up is painful, there is compensation as you turn to see the valley lit up with radiance. The long shadows of the woods stretch across the hills, the beech grove close at hand is all aglow, the stems a silvery green, the budding foliage all bronze and gold. Over the wide fields, whether green with springing corn or still brown and bare, there steals a golden sheen, and the distant woods seem to flame on the far hill-top. And out of the thick of it all comes the Metropolitan train, and now, take your seats for Baker Street.

THE JOY OF WORK.

My friend Satterton dashed into my den the other day with a fine piece of information. He had run down to Mentone for a week to see his grandmother, who cannot endure our English winters. That means that he had spent an hour daily with the old lady for three successive days; the rest of the time not devoted to the railway, his meals, and his bed, being consecrated—the word is ironical—to the alluring tables at Monte Carlo.

"Well, Satterton," I asked, as I put my pen aside, "how is the dear old dame?"

"My dear fellow," was his inconsequent reply, "it was most extraordinary. 'Red' came up nine times running."

"So! And, of course, you put your money on black, doubling your stake each time, and so losing—— But no, you

wouldn't look so absurdly cheerful if you had done that."

"Of course not," he exclaimed almost pettishly. "I have learnt better than that. I always back the colour which shows up last, you know."

"Which to my rather dull mind seems to place you in much the same position as if you were to back the colour that had not shown up last," I observed. "Well, what have you won?"

"To be precise, two thousand nine hundred and forty-five francs."

"Goodness me! And you went down with a mere twenty-pound note!"

"That is so. I am contented. More, I'm simply enchanted. For a month I shall not go to the office. Clients do not come, so why should I go to the depressing old hole? I shall journey to town and enjoy myself."

He would not be persuaded. To town he went, and in less than a fortnight back he came looking like an Anglo-Indian in the last stage but one of a liver complaint, and with a face as long as a window.

"Thank goodness that little fling is over!" he sighed. "And now what have you been doing this last month—you look desperately well?"

"I, Satterton? Oh, I have just been grinding along. My earnings for the month are about fifty pounds, which is neither poverty nor wealth. It suffices, however, and that, after all, is the main thing."

Whereupon Satterton uttered an impatient and self-reproachful ejaculation—he was given that way—and wished fervently for about five minutes that he too had stuck to his desk. He wished it even more ardently when he learnt that three clients had called, on an average thrice each, to put some litigation in his hands. One and all the three had said that they should not trouble Mr. Satterton again.

This little episode, commonplace though it is, has set me writing an essay on the joy of work.

Nothing in ordinary experience so surely brings its own reward, and also divers unexpected recompenses, as good, honest, undeviating labour. I do not care what form the labour takes; so it answers the above qualifications it will satisfy.

The complement to the remark does not need to be insisted upon. Doctor Watts, and every story writer for the young, point the very obvious moral about the peril, and worse, of idleness. Whether Satterton's

little fling in the Riviera and the metropolis was a degree above or a degree below positive idleness, I declare I am not wise enough to determine. I fancy, however, there is not much in it. Had he sat listless and unoccupied at home instead of going to see his poor old grandmother, worse might have befallen him than the stout measure of remorse and self-disgust which came as the wind-up to his spell of dissipation. It is hard saying, still harder guessing. So much depends upon the individual character, about which no mortal man can affirm anything dogmatically.

In work, as in the majority of life's efforts, the first step is the most irksome and the most important. It is extremely annoying to put on the harness of method after the waywardness of early youth. A certain amount of chafing, and even actual rebellion, must be expected. There is something lacking in the individual if it do not declare itself. But little by little the harness becomes familiar. Then it begins to endear itself to us. After a time pleasure itself of the more violent kinds fails to lure us out of the groove. We have grown to caress what seemed at the outset such vexatious fetters, and eventually we hug our capacity for labour as the dearest and truest proof that we are still lusty and serviceable citizens of the world.

There is no happiness after that of the heart like that which comes in the train of well-regulated work. It is, if you will, rather a sober kind of happiness; but for this very reason it is more enduring and better able to fortify us. "Mirth," we are told, "is a very dubious sign of felicity." It is not, in fact, a sign of felicity at all, but of elation only. Elation is like champagne; it is of many qualities, and you cannot, therefore, unless you are well acquainted with the different brands, tell what the consequences may be. Only one thing in the matter you may be positive about, and this is, that the feeling will soon attenuate and vanish. There may be quite a disagreeable sequel in store for you, as for the man who drinks largely of the champagne at one franc seventy-five centimes the full-sized bottle, which you may buy in the humbler sort of restaurants at Rheims.

The happiness of work is of a very different kidney. It does not eventuate in hectic and flighty aspirations. In improving his material position in the world, work broadens the base upon which a

man builds his little castle of hopes and resolutions. The foundations of a house, we all know, are a good half of the battle. Besides, having been thus enabled to erect a comfortable—perhaps even a stately—edifice for yourself, you are then free in your leisure moments to bethink you what you can do for your brethren. This sets you at once in your proper niche in the world. You will not of necessity become puffed with vainglory in realising that you can in a measure play the agreeable part of philanthropist. On the contrary, your discipline of work will have taught you quite early that misdirected thought-energy is labour wasted. Moreover, nothing is so enlightening as the full exercise of one's mental and physical faculties—that is, work at its ripest and most useful point. And with enlightenment comes an infallible sense of the futility of self-conceit, as well as the folly of it.

Nor need the work be all-engrossing. That were an error of judgement almost as great as its opposite, into which the butterfly pursuer of pleasure nearly always falls. It is enough that it be always within arm's length of us.

"It is a happy thing for us," says George Macdonald, "that this is really all we have to concern ourselves about—what to do next. No man can do the second thing. He can do the first. If he omits it, the wheels of the social Juggernaut roll over him, and leave him more or less crushed behind. If he does it, he keeps in front and finds room to do the next again; and so is sure to arrive at something, for the onward march will carry him with it. There is no saying to what perfection of success a man may come, who begins with what he can do, and uses the means at his hand."

In fact, it is in work as in other departments of vital economy: short views are best. Do not grind away and wear yourself into greyness and baldness long before your time in order to amass a huge fortune in the remote future. But just work because there is life, and a living, and placid-faced contentment in work's train. Men like Jay Gould are warnings, not examples. They make slaves of themselves in seeking the more than necessary for human happiness. Their self-imposed yoke soon galls them, robs them of spiritual elasticity, and anon ends them prematurely.

At certain times and in certain moods we are prone to pity those who begin life totally unaided by the experience and

money which parents are expected to bequeath to their children. On the face of it, the situation ought to be rather trying. There is no doubt that it heaps additional toil on the heads of persons thus constituted. But just as no man, unless employed in unhealthy work, or unless bodily incapable, was ever killed by such a case, so if he be but brave enough to confront his inordinate responsibilities and trials boldly, he will soon show the inordinate profit he gains thereby. As surely as anything, he will ere long realise that he is the better rather than the worse for having no shield betwixt himself and those buffets which constitute experience.

John Morley has an informing word or two on this subject. "Hardship in youth," he tells us, "has many drawbacks, but it has the immense advantage over academic ease of making the student's interest in men real, and not merely literary." That is so, without doubt. If you look through the list of the great benefactors among men you will find that the most notable of them began life humbly, worked hard, and yet not so absorbedly as to kill the faculty of sympathy within them, and in the end were privileged to write their names in letters of gold upon the memorial tablets of a generation or a century.

Work is not only nutriment and muscle to a man. It is also one of the best conceivable of tonics and medicaments. There are crises in most lives when despair seems about to gain the upper hand over us. If, as is most probable, the distress is of mind, in the name of salvation turn all your strength in one direction. Concentrate upon some form of work; the more exacting the better. Most probably you will by-and-by bless this work as the agent of your rescue.

As Thackeray—who liked work none too well—tells us: "What a wholesome thing fierce mental occupation is! Better than dissipation to take thoughts out of one; only one can't always fix the mind down, and other thoughts will bother it. . . . What funny songs I've written when fit to hang myself!"

But for his faculty of song-making, who shall say the author of "Vanity Fair" might not really and truly have put a rope round his throat one sad morning? Many a man has thus cut short his life who might still be living if he had taken a strong dose of work in the beginning of his depression. There is, moreover, no disagreeable reaction after physic of this

kind. The longer you continue taking it, the less nauseous it will seem; and, meanwhile, your complaint will disappear almost unaccountably.

With a strong right arm, and a resolute will to guide it, man can more than half "control his doom." If faith can move mountains, work can create them, even as it can annihilate them, no matter how hard their substance or how great their altitude.

Work is developement. There is something infinitely pitiable about the lot of a vast number of young men, who from the age of two or three-and-twenty exercise neither their hands nor their heads in any specific direction. They become mere fungi—not of the wholesome kind. They go through life as well-dressed copyists of the manners and actions of others; and just because they are not influenced judiciously by the discipline of labour, they can hardly help copying the very actions and manners of their fellow-creatures which are least worth copying. Thus they drift downhill. Perhaps their suffering is not very acute. They have not been educated to the point at which remorse and regret can pique in a salutary manner. But they must be insensible indeed if they can live out their two-score and ten years—a score deducted because in dispensing with work they lose one of the finest stimulants of life—without periodic fits of realisation that they are little better than cumberers of the earth.

"What," exclaimed George Eliot, in one of her enthusiasms, "is anything worth until it is uttered? Is not the Universe one great utterance? Utterance there must be in word or deed to make life of any worth." And again: "I love the souls that rush along to their goal with a full stream of sentiment—that have too much of the positive to be harassed by the perpetual negatives, which after all are but the disease of the soul, to be expelled by fortifying the principle of vitality."

That is it. How know you what is in you until you buckle to at something with might and main? Your joy in life will be proportionate to the degree in which you are able to bring to fruition your various innate aptitudes. These aptitudes will continue innate unless you escort them into the light and exercise them. You may not know of their existence; but if they are in you in an exceptional measure, you will at times be conscious of a mysterious kind of discontent, which may be held to

indicate their appeal to you for a chance of developement. In such a case, work at what is closest to your hand and, if possible, most to your liking. Be patient, and Nature will indeed be uncivil to you if, either gradually or on a sudden, she do not by-and-by let you into the secret of your special gift. Then you may hope your heartiest. You have crossed the bridge, and are on the high-road to one form of happiness.

It seems clear, therefore, that a man owes it to his individuality as well as to his reason, not merely to stroll through life with his hands in his pockets. It is murder to stifle his unweaned abilities ere they have had time to do more than gasp in proclamation of their existence. He also sins against his relatives and friends, and the country of which he might, an he would, become an ornament. The machinery of life, which we are so apt to accept, as a matter of course, as something put in motion and kept in motion without labour on our part, depends upon us. It is initiated and kept going by our conjoined energies and activities. A knowledge of this makes the idler in life appear in his true light—as a battener upon the produce of our toil, a mere parasite on mankind's great corporation. However, we need not be eager to revile him for his meanness. We others can afford to support while compassionating him, and he will not fail to punish himself as long as he lives.

But enough. My theme is too broad and high a one to be worthily discussed in a page or two of print. It may be recommended to the capable poet in want of a subject.

MY OWN PETARD.

A COMPLETE STORY.

I AM a man with a grievance—a grievance that goes by the name of George Dereham. I have never really liked the fellow, and yet I see as much of him as if we were another Damon and Pythias. Providence caused us to be born about the same time in the same county, our respective—and respected—parents sent us to the same house at school, and Nature, by giving us brains of pretty much the same calibre, kept us throughout in the same form; indeed, we were never more than three places apart in “school-order” during our stay there. But when we went to the same college at Oxford I began to think that I had had about enough of

George Dereham; and when we left the ‘Varsity and settled down, each at his own home, within three miles of the other, I was quite sure of it. But what was I to do? My father wished me to reside with him during the greater portion of the year, so that it was quite out of the question that I should absent myself; and I could not very well go and ask George to leave his home simply because I objected to residing in the same county with him. In the first place, he would not have gone if I had; in the second, he stands six feet two in his socks, and is broad in proportion, while I am not more than five feet six in my boots, and have been described as dapper. There are certain situations in which a man can't say exactly what he thinks.

You see, our positions are very similar. He is the only son and heir of Sir Edward Dereham, of Dereham Park, a baronet of King James the First's creation; and I am the only son and heir of Sir John Chugg, of Chugg Hall, a baronet of King Soap's creation. In other words, my father, who was the inventor of a soap of great excellence—do you use Chugg's Soap?—having made a large fortune, turned his business into a company and bought a fine estate in Starrshire, where he settled down. So many thousands of good people used the celebrated soap that they literally washed my father into society; for Sir Roger Devereux, of Starrborough House, a county magnate, was only too glad to give his consent when the rich Mr. Chugg—as he then was—came wooing the youngest Miss Devereux. After all, as Lady Devereux remarked, soap was a clean thing, and so my father's suit was, like his soap, “free from anything of an irritating nature”; the marriage, which took place in due course, securing him a permanent place in the county society.

Now, the Derehams are near neighbours of ours, and Lady Dereham has always been my mother's dearest friend, so that from the first—when I was much too young to protest—George and I were thrown constantly together. We played together, we fought together—we were more of a size then—and we got into all sorts of mischief together; until we were sent to school together, as I have mentioned. And I am beginning to believe that we always will be together. What I have done to deserve a sentence of Dereham for life I cannot guess; but as such is apparently my doom, I must try to make the best of this very bad job.

Not that Dereham is a bad fellow in his way; but then his way is not my way. We are as much unlike in disposition as we are in build. I am—if I may be allowed to say so—much more intellectual than he is. I have resources within myself; I am an enthusiastic stamp-collector, and have written poetry. George thinks of nothing but killing time and game, in its season; and he has read my poetry, which he has been pleased to condemn as "awful rot." Clearly an outer barbarian. Then our ways are so different. I am active, he is slow; I am excitable and easily moved, he is stolid; I talk quickly, and—I have been told—eloquently, he drawls his words out slowly, often interposing an "er" between them, and pausing on it like a man looking round for a stone to throw at you. I find this last habit of his peculiarly irritating, and, indeed, I told him so upon one occasion; but, of course, I got no satisfaction out of him.

"My dear—er—Pongo!" he said—I do wish he would not call me "Pongo," a senseless nickname given me in my school-days, and intended as a reflection on my personal appearance—"the poet says that 'to err is human, to forgive divine.' So please condone my faults as I do—er—yours."

That's the kind of man he is; can you wonder I dislike him? But I have yet another reason. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Dereham is always rivalling me—and successfully, too; that's where the shoe pinches. He is, of course, a better shot, a better rider, and a better athlete in every way than I am, for I have never gone in for that rough-and-tumble nonsense called "sport"; but I regret to say that even in the departments I consider peculiarly my own, he has at times got the better of me. I am forced to admit that, irritating as his drawl seems to me, other people seem quite to enjoy it, and I have sometimes actually noticed my own companion's attention wandering to his dawdling description of a recent run, even when I was in the very thick of some such interesting subject as the difference between the British Guiana stamp of 1863 and the ordinary issue. Somehow, Dereham seems to get on better in society than I do; indeed, he manages in some mysterious way to forestall me in everything. Do I see a horse I think would suit me, Mr. Dereham has bought it half an hour before; do I wish particularly to take a certain lady down to dinner, she falls to

Dereham's lot; have I, after much toil and trouble, successfully fired off a neat little impromptu witticism, Dereham immediately caps it with another—not better, but evidently more suited to the comprehension of his hearers, for they invariably laugh more heartily at it than at mine. But why prolong the list? Whatever I do, wherever I go, it is always the same story. Dereham, Dereham, Dereham—always Dereham!

But I never really knew what it was to hate the fellow until I fell in love. For, unfortunately, he fell in love, too, at the same time, and—of course!—with the same girl. Her name was Laura Ferrers, and she was certainly charming.

She was the daughter of old Ferrers, the M.F.H. of the Starrshire Hunt, and I first met her in London during her first season. When I say that I first met her, I mean that I then first saw her in all the glory of womanhood, for I had known her slightly, down in our county, as a girl home for the holidays. But the grub and the butterfly are not more unlike than the little schoolgirl of those days and the Miss Ferrers I saw that memorable evening in June a year ago. I fell in love at first sight, and during the remainder of the month to which my stay was limited, rushed indefatigably about to every place where there was any probability of meeting her. But there was another Richmond in the field—need I mention his name? Dereham also was spending a month or so in London, Dereham also had been fascinated by Miss Ferrers, and Dereham also was hunting her about from house to house. Really it was too bad. I had left the fellow safe down in Starrshire, thinking to enjoy a short holiday, and he had deliberately followed me up to London. He might have deferred his visit until my return, I did think; and, at all events, he need not have fallen in love with Miss Ferrers; there were plenty of other girls knocking about, any one of whom would be much too good for him. But, of course, that was only my own opinion; Dereham thought differently, and, true to his tradition, must needs enter the lists as my rival. With little apparent success, however, for though we managed to get very much in each other's way, neither of us made much progress in his suit. Miss Ferrers was too busily engaged in enjoying her first season to have time to fall in love. Certainly, when I left town in the beginning of July, I could not flatter myself that I had made any decided im-

pression on her, and Dereham, who followed me home within a week, had evidently met with no better success, as I could tell by his manner.

In August the Ferrers family came home and our rivalry took a new and acute form. In the first place, we had the stage practically to ourselves. August is a very quiet month in our part of the country, nearly all the younger men being in the north for the shooting, and Miss Ferrers, who in London could hardly count her admirers, now found them, to all intents and purposes, reduced to Dereham and myself. But we made up for lack of numbers by our enthusiasm. The Elms, where the Ferrerses lived, was about equidistant—some three miles—from our respective houses, and George and I were always walking or driving over there to idle, play tennis, or dine. Somehow I could never succeed in stealing a march on Dereham. Some Corsican Brother-like instinct seemed to warn him whenever I had sneaked over—it is really the only word for it—to the Elms, and within a quarter of an hour he would be after me. Try as I would I could not elude him. Just as I was congratulating myself on having outwitted him, he would come lounging round a corner, or from behind a tree, or overtake me in his dog-cart on the road, always affecting great surprise at finding me there.

"Hulloa, Pongo!" he invariably remarked. "Where are you off to?"—as if he didn't know!—"The Elms? That's odd; so am I. Funny thing that we should both have struck the same idea, isn't it?"

As for getting an opportunity for proposing, that was a sheer impossibility, and yet I had come to the stage when it is almost a case of "speak or die." I had made more than one attempt to end my suspense, but one cannot bring such an important question out plump, without any preparation. One has to work up to it by degrees, and while I was working up to it Dereham was working up to us. He had an eagle eye which told him at once if we had strayed away from the others, and as soon as he could manage it he would be on our track. Twice had he managed to nip promising opportunities in the bud, and I began to despair of eluding his vigilance. Nor could I manage to get a chance by outstaying him. He had a kind of stolid way of taking up his position in a chair, or at a girl's side, which seemed

to defy you to dislodge him, and certainly whenever I tried my strength against his, he invariably worsted me. All I could do was to occupy my place until the last possible moment, so that Time might come to my rescue and force us to withdraw together. In this, at least, I succeeded; and though he prevented me from proposing, I did him the like service—for which, no doubt, he was as grateful to me as I was to him.

So August drew to an end and neither of us had won the prize; but I had determined to put an end to a state of things which was becoming absolutely intolerable, and had fixed on Mrs. Mostyn's picnic in the last days of the month as likely to give me a chance of doing so. Picnics often provide one with opportunities of the kind I required, and if—"much virtue in an if"—I could only manage to baffle Dereham's vigilance for five minutes, I had quite decided to blurt out my proposal in the fewest possible words, and learn the best, or worst, at once.

Mrs. Mostyn's picnic was quite an annual institution, and the spot chosen on this occasion was Fordby Abbey—the show place of the district.

The abbey appears to have been a place of some importance in its day, and its buildings must have covered a large area; but the Reformers did their work thoroughly, and as, in addition, the ruins were long used as a quarry by the neighbouring villagers, who repaired their old cottages or built new ones with the fine stone which could be had for the trouble of carting, but little of the old place now remains. The ruins, in fact, only consist of a few shattered pillars, several heaps of moss-grown stones, many green banks, two fragments of wall and a transept window, and about half of a tower—about forty feet of it—covered with ivy and carefully propped up by huge stakes, like an ancient cripple upon crutches. This tower has a flight of steps leading to the top, where a small grass mound gives a comfortable enough seat, and a tree, which has taken up its quarters there, adds a pleasant shade, but within the last few years the owner of the property has shut the tower up, partly because it is not altogether safe, and partly, no doubt, from a natural desire to prevent the tourists from carrying it away piecemeal in "relics." For Fordby Abbey is much frequented by tourists and picnickers.

On the occasion of our visit, however,

we had the ruins to ourselves, and as the weather was perfect, everything augured well for the success of our picnic. There is a public-house near the abbey, of course, or the place would not be so popular with the excursionists as it is; in fact, there is quite a large-sized inn with plenty of good stabling accommodation, where we could put up our horses. But we taxed its resources to the utmost, for we were a large party. Every kind of conveyance seemed to be represented, from the dog-cart to the coach, and as two o'clock—the hour appointed for lunch—drew near, the scene in what the local antiquary declares, with some show of reason, used to be the cloisters, was a very lively one. Laura Ferrers was there, of course, and looking her best; but I contented myself with admiring her from a distance. After lunch, when the party broke up into twos and threes—that was my time for approaching her. If only Dereham could be dodged successfully or kept out of the way for half an hour, all would be well, and I would be able to rid myself of the load of unspoken love which was really becoming too much for me. But Dereham was the stumbling-block, and his absence could not safely be reckoned on for more than half a minute. Already he was hovering about her and pestering her with his attentions. Really this persecution was becoming absolutely unbearable. I was getting desperate.

I do not intend to dwell upon the details of the lunch. I am better at eating a lunch than describing one, and besides, this particular affair presented no features of unusual interest. Mrs. Mostyn was an old hand at such entertainments, and everything was just as it ought to have been. Nothing had been forgotten, the salt and sugar kept as strictly apart as two respectable Britons who have not been introduced, no one's dress was spoilt, the salad was a success—in a word, there was absolutely nothing to grumble at. And as a picnic, like a nation, is happiest when it has no history, ours was unanimously voted a triumph in its line. Still, it was a trifle dull, and certain of the older members of the company protracted their meal to such a length that I almost fretted myself into a fever. It was impossible to sit there quietly and watch old Mr. Gorman Dycer chump, chump, chumping away, with the thought of the coming important interview ever on my mind. Now that I had braced myself for the plunge, I wanted to get it

over at once, and it was intensely annoying to have to stand shivering on the bank, so to speak, while Mr. Dycer and his kind ate their way steadily through the bill of fare. There was something so provoking in their self-satisfied appearance and their occasional small jokes between bites, that in a few minutes more I should certainly have got up to throw something at them, had not my mother suddenly remembered some order she wished to give her coachman, and sent me back to the hotel to deliver it.

I set off with alacrity, for anything was better than sitting where I was, watching the animals feed. I calculated that Gorman Dycer and Co. were good for another quarter of an hour at least, so that I would be able to return in excellent time to manœuvre for an opening with Laura. But I was delayed longer than I had anticipated, and when I got back I found all the birds had flown. A few grooms and footmen were packing things into baskets in a corner, but save for them the ground was deserted, though in the distance I could see one or two groups just vanishing into the woods. Evidently the party had only recently broken up; but where was I to search for the only member of it I cared about? Was that eternal Dereham with her? Had she gone to the Wishing Well, or the Abbots' Seat, or the woods?

I determined to beat the woods first, and set out with hasty strides, walking with my head bent and looking neither to right nor left, till—bang! I ran up against some one just beneath the ivy-covered tower.

"Halloa, where 'are you off to, Pongo! Why can't you keep your eyes open!"

It was Dereham! Then he was not with Miss Ferrers after all! The relief was so great that I welcomed him with positive effusion.

"But where are you going?" I asked, after a few minutes' talk. "I am going after the rest of the party, but you seem to be coming away from them."

"Ye-yes," he admitted, after a moment's hesitation. "I want a quiet smoke, that's all, and I'm going up here to get it." And he pointed at the tower, the door of which stood open.

"Why, that's unusual," I cried. "I've never seen that door open before in all my many visits. I wonder what the reason is?"

"I'm sure I don't know; but as it's an

opportunity that may not occur again I intend to take advantage of it."

"But it's very unsociable conduct, you know," I went on, still in high good-humour. "Why withdraw yourself from the festive scene you are so well fitted to adorn? Why waste on the desert air the sweetness of your prime cigars?"

"Thank you, Pongo," he interrupted hastily, pointing with his stick through the tower door, "I'm going to smoke a cigar up at the top, and you won't mind my saying that I infinitely prefer a quiet smoke to all your—er—vapouring."

"Bah! go if you will," I muttered, as his figure disappeared. "I will not throw my pearls before swine. And now for Laura Ferrers. At all events, it's a comfort to know that Dereham's out of the way for the time being. Oh, if I could only manage to keep him where he is for an hour or so! Oh, for the days of magicians and slaves of the ring! If I could transport him a few thousand miles by merely saying a word, or had some spell for turning him into stone, or sending him off to sleep for a few hundred years, I might be happy yet."

With a sigh I turned to go, when I found myself face to face with a little, elderly, withered-up man, who had just laid down a wheelbarrow full of tools. I recognised him at once as McTavish, the custodian of the ruins, and gardener of the grounds lying about them—a cross old Scotchman, whom long experience of the British beanfeaster had made something of a cynic.

"Are any of your pair-r-ty up yonder?" he asked, brushing past me to throw the tools into a receptacle prepared for them beneath the dilapidated steps.

"Why do you ask?" I retorted, in the Scotch style.

"Why do I ask? Weel, because I'm going to lock the door. That's why I ask."

Lock the door! And Dereham was at the top, probably half-asleep already! The old man would lock the door and wander away with the key, and I would have secured the time I so much desired. It was a great temptation, and yet I hesitated.

"I thought it was to be left open," I said.

"Left open! What for wad we be doin' such a fool's trick as yon for? Do ye no ken that we keep a' the tools here? 'Deed, it's precious few we'd find the morn

if we left the place open with so many folk about."

"I can assure you your tools are safe so far as we're concerned," I said, laughing. "But I forgive your somewhat uncomplimentary remark. You don't know us."

"'Deed, I'm thinking it's because I know you a' too weel. I've no been here fifteen year for nothing!"

Somehow I had failed to impress him. I decided to throw a slight tinge of hauteur into my tone of condescending familiarity; but he was the first to speak, while I was looking round for a retort.

"Noo then, sir," he said, as he threw in the last tool; "are any of your pair-r-ty up there?"

It was "now or never"; I had to make up my mind at once, "Yes" or "No."

"No," I replied boldly, and the next minute the sturdy oak door was shut and locked and the old man was stumping off with the key. Dereham was locked in!

I stood by the door and listened intently for some minutes for a shout or cry, but all was still. George had evidently not heard the closing of the door, and might be considered as safely out of my way for the next hour, at least. Full of hope I hurried after the little Scotchman and overtook him a few hundred yards from the tower. I had a question or two to ask him before my mind would be quite at ease.

"I think it's a very good plan to keep that tower locked," I began as I came up to him.

"I'm gey sure it is," he replied.

"For it certainly is not safe."

"It'll last our time," McTavish replied.

"Quite so, quite so," I admitted hastily, "with you to look after it. But still, it is not safe to climb about on, is it? Now I'm afraid, as some of our party have found their way to the top, the others will be sure to want to follow their example."

"They'll hae to want," said the Scotchman shortly.

"Ah, but I'm afraid they'll give you a lot of trouble. They'll be hunting for you to come and open the door, and bothering you, and shouting for you all over the place."

"Dinna fash yersel' about me, ma man," he replied. "They won't find me about the groun's, for I'm gaun hame till my tea. And as for their shouting, it's little attention I'll pay to it. I'm aye unco deaf when I'm at ma meals," and he chuckled loudly.

This was evidently a Scotch joke, so I laughed heartily and declared that it was the best thing I had ever heard. Then, after a pause, given over to enjoyment of the jest, I said:

"So if you hear people shouting for you, you won't pay any attention?"

"No me. I'll come back when it suits me, and at my usual time, and no a second before—not if the whole pack of you was to yell yerselves hoarse after me."

That was enough. After a few more words I left the custodian to pursue his path alone, and casting one guilty glance in the direction of the tower, hurried off to find Laura Ferrers. Dereham was safely disposed of, in all probability, until our party began to reassemble in the ruins for afternoon tea, and if only I could find Laura, I might at last hope to speak to her undisturbed. But where was she? I could not find her on the river banks; I toiled up the Abbots' Seat without reward, visited the Wishing Well in vain, and wandered up and down the woods like one distracted, disturbing, and receiving wrathful glances from, more than one couple; but without finding her I sought. I had at various times come across every other member of the party, but still she, and she alone, eluded my "patient search and vigil long." She was nowhere to be found, and the golden minutes during which I could depend on Dereham's absence were slipping fast away. Half an hour, an hour, an hour and a half, and still no Laura. Then I lost my head, and began wandering to and fro without method and with grim despair tugging at my heartstrings, till suddenly I heard a voice calling me by name, and starting from my gloomy reverie, found myself beneath the ruined tower. Like the murderer in the story-books, I had wandered back unconsciously to the scene of my crime.

"I say, Chugg," said Dereham, bending over and speaking in wonderfully good-tempered tones, "I wish you would try and find that fool McTavish, or whatever his name is. He's locked us up here."

"Us?" I repeated, a dreadful foreboding seizing upon me.

"Yes," Dereham answered; "luckily he did not condemn us to solitary confinement. I'm afraid I wouldn't have been so patient if he had."

"Not alone!" I murmured, retreating several paces until I could command a view of the top, and there, seated beneath the tree and looking remarkably comfortable

and contented, was the object of my search—Laura Ferrers. I had allowed them to be locked up together.

"No, not alone," Dereham went on, looking irritatingly happy. "I found Miss Ferrers at the top here after I left you at the foot. But when, a minute or two afterwards, we went down to get away, we found the door locked. So we had to come back and make ourselves comfortable here till some one came to our assistance. You're the first, and we've been here quite twenty minutes."

"Twenty minutes?" I said. "It is one hour and forty-five minutes since I left you at the foot of this confounded tower."

"Impossible, Chugg; impossible!"

"But true," I said with a sneer. "Time flies, you know."

"That's true," he replied; "but Miss Ferrers and I don't. So we'd be awfully obliged if you'd hunt out that McTavish fellow and get him to open the door, as that's the only way we can get out. I wonder where the man is? I've been shouting for him for quite a long time, and couldn't make him hear."

"He's gone to his tea, so he told me—I mean, I shouldn't wonder."

"Well, will you try to find him for us? Will you unbar the dungeon door and bid the prisoners go forth? Or, to woo you in the language of the Muses, suited to your poetic temperament:

From this stone jug
Release us, Chugg!"

Wretched driveller! And I had been out-generalled by a thing like that.

"Oh, I'll find him for you," I answered sulkily enough.

"Thank you, old chap. Warm weather, isn't it?"

Warm weather, indeed, during which I had been tearing up and down, searching for Laura while she was comfortably seated with my rival. He must have known that she was there when he ascended the tower; watched her up from a distance, and then followed her stealthily as a fox. That would account for his confusion when he met me, and his evident desire to cut short our conversation. So while I was congratulating myself on thus disposing of Dereham, he was, no doubt, actually proposing to Laura; and alas! I had done it all. In trying to keep them apart I had actually brought them together! For once I had been too clever; it always was a fault of mine.

I will not dwell upon the search for

McTavish. I roared myself hoarse, bellowing his name, without result; and I had to walk all the way to his cottage—tormented all the time by the thought of Laura and Dereham seated comfortably in the shade together—where I found him enjoying an afternoon nap, from which he was only awakened with much difficulty.

Well, George and Miss Ferrers were liberated at last, amidst plenty of chaff from several members of the party who had collected during my absence; but I could not join in the laughter, for I saw something in the faces of both that told me all my hopes were blighted. And I was right, as I soon learnt. That evening, as I was gloomily smoking in the garden after dinner, I was joined by Dereham, who had strolled over specially to see me, he said, though he was very slow about coming to the point.

"Well, Chugg," he said at last, "we've always been chums, haven't we? Always been together at home, and school, and college, and all that kind of thing, eh?"

"Always," I groaned, "always."

"And so I don't think I could have any one better, or more suitable than you, if you'll accept."

"Accept what?"

"To be sure, I haven't told you. That's odd. Well, look here; the long and the short of it is that I've proposed to Miss Ferrers, and been accepted."

"On the tower?" I asked.

"Yes, on the tower. How did you guess? That was the place. I've been trying for weeks to say what I wanted, and somehow I've always funk'd it. Even when I found her up there alone I could hardly get a word out, and if that door had been unlocked I never should. For before I had got much further than 'What beautiful weather we're having,' she had turned to go down. But when we got to the foot we couldn't open the door, as you know, and we had to get back to the top again. Well, I wasn't going to miss such a chance as that. I knew I would never get such another in a lifetime, and so I took the jump. Bless you, it was as easy as anything. After the first few words the difficulty was to stop, and pretty soon we'd come to an understanding. I won't bother you with what followed."

"Thank you," I ejaculated with fervour.

"But I certainly owe a debt of thanks to that Scotch angel."

"I never heard of a Scotch angel," I said sourly. "I have always hoped that

they, at least, left their accent behind them on earth."

"Well, you know whom I mean. Call him the Knave of Spades, if you like—to speak by the card. But, upon my word, if it hadn't been for him, I don't believe I'd have been engaged for many a day to come yet—if at all. As it is, we intend to be married before Christmas."

All this was so much extra torture to me. It was quite evident that I had—all unconsciously—acted as a kind of Providence in bringing the lovers together.

"But what do you wish to ask me?" I enquired.

"Ah, yes; to be sure. Well, as you're my best friend, will you also be my—er—best man?"

His best man! Perish the thought! Yet, could it be that he had been so wrapped up in his suit that he had not noticed my passion? My love had not so blinded me, but then I was certainly far more observant than George. Or had he noticed it, and did he wish to give me a chance of masking my discomfiture—of concealing my disappointment from the public view? In either case ought I not to accept his offer? If George was not aware that I had been his rival, defeat was not the time to proclaim that fact. Why should I proclaim my failure on the house-tops by putting on Manfred airs and refusing my food? If George did not know of my disappointment, no one need know it—save one. Laura must have been aware of my feelings towards her, and yet, strange as it may seem, she had deliberately chosen George. After all, she could not be the kindred soul I had hoped for, or she would not—— But all such thoughts are folly. At all events, she knew I loved her; but the fewer that knew that secret the better.

"You want me to be your best man?" I asked, after a pause. "Does Miss Ferrers know?"

"Not she. We were talking about something more inter—— I mean, I didn't mention it. But, of course you will, won't you?"

Yes, I would; my mind was made up. As the villain in the old melodramas used to say, "I would dissemble—ah, ah!" though, alas! for me no "time will come!" I turned to George with what was meant for a smile, but which, I fear, more closely resembled a snarl, and held out my hand.

"I shall be delighted!" I said.

"OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE underground passage had been discovered by accident by Wilfred Egerton when a boy of fifteen. He had, for reasons of his own, kept the secret to himself for some years, only betraying it to his mother at last on the strict condition that she should not even mention its existence to his father. As by it she was able to have at times stolen interviews with her son after he was forbidden his father's house, she kept the secret faithfully. On more than one occasion he had spent a day or two in the underground chamber. Mrs. Page—the housekeeper's room being connected with the passage—was after a time let into the secret. It was only since the last trouble had fallen on Wilfred that Gilbert had learned it as well. After Wilfred's disappearance from London, with the country in hue-and-cry against him, his mother, distracted by anxiety, used to visit the place continually, always imagining that one day, if he had not been able to leave the country, hunted and despairing, he might fly to the old place for shelter. In her dread and anxiety she became less cautious, and one day, a week or two previous to the ball, Gilbert had surprised her at the summer-house, by which entrance she usually came and went to the underground room. She lost her presence of mind, and in her dreadful anxiety for Wilfred's fate betrayed all to her son, beseeching him to spare his brother. Gilbert in all his life had never seen his mother break down as she did that day. She was half beside herself in her grief and terror. Before her tears and entreaties his own bitterness against his brother, his hatred for his crime, his respect for his father's commands, yielded. He promised to help him should he need his assistance. As it happened, the very night of the ball he heard news of the fugitive. It was Molloy himself, the poacher, who had sent him, while the ball was going on, a note, telling him that Wilfred Egerton was in the neighbourhood.

He and Wilfred had been friends as boys, playing many a wild and lawless trick together. Though Gilbert had not known it, the friendship still continued.

Gilbert and Mrs. Page had been hurriedly discussing in his study the

ill-spelt, hasty scrawl from the poacher, when Hope had appeared with Wilfred's message. Since that night Molloy had disappeared, Gilbert knowing no more of his whereabouts than the police themselves.

Hope, after that reassuring smile up into Mrs. Page's anxious face, crept through the archway and found herself in a bricked passage. The vaulted roof was so low that she could not stand upright; the air, heavy and mouldy, was close to suffocation. The passage was very old. The walls and roof, in the light of the lantern, showed dark and slimy, except where monstrous patches of grey, glistening fungus, suggesting decay rather than living growth, spread over them.

Here and there the damp of the earth had penetrated through cracks in the masonry, while in some places, the fissures having widened, the earth itself had filtered through, lessening the space of the already low and narrow passage.

The floor was flagged with stone, and this was in a fairly good condition. As she crept farther in, she saw that in some places there had been comparatively recent attempts made to repair the ravages of time.

The passage apparently led for some distance under the grounds, but in what direction Hope could not judge. She did not trouble her head much with speculations. She hastened along, possessed by the thought of getting out of the horrible place as quickly as she possibly could.

"If I were a heroine, I should be as comfortable and as much at my ease as if I were—going to church," she said once aloud, to cheer herself with the sound of her own voice. But the effect was so ghastly—the sound so muffled and hollow—that she turned cold with fright and hurried on still more recklessly, saying a little prayer to herself, and thinking that she would never wish in her life to act the part of a heroine again. With a sense of remorseful humiliation, even in the midst of her panic, she felt that the heroines she once had wished to emulate had been made of very different stuff to such a poor little coward as herself. But she found herself at last confronted by an oak door, studded with massive iron nails, of which Mrs. Page had told her.

She proceeded to follow out the instructions given her. She was to count these same iron nails after a peculiar fashion, and on reaching a certain one she would find the spring that opened the door. It

was with a relief unspeakable that she saw the heavy door yield at last to her efforts. It slowly swung open and she found herself on the threshold of Wilfred Egerton's hiding-place.

She saw a small apartment, its arched roof supported here and there by stone pillars. It reminded her of a crypt, or a part of one, of some ancient church. She remembered that there was a tradition to the effect that a monastery had once stood on the site of the present house.

There was little furniture, and that of an old-world date.

A lamp of modern fashion, burning dimly now, and filling the air with the sickly fumes given off by oil-lamps when they have nearly burned themselves out, stood on a rudely-carved table of black oak. But for that, the air of the subterranean chamber would have been fresher and sweeter than that of the passage. As it was, Hope drew it in with eager relief.

In a deep recess was a low, broad, stone seat, like one of the coffer-shaped tombstones fitted into niches in the old churches. It might indeed have been an ancient tombstone. On it had been thrown a pile of rugs, and on them lay the wounded man.

He lay motionless and silent, except for an occasional low moaning. His face flushed with fever, his eyes were closed, their dark lashes, curling thick like those of a beautiful woman, on his thin cheek.

The coverlet had been tossed back, and the blood-stained shirt and bandaged arm added to the ghastly effect.

A mist sprang into the girl's eyes as she stood looking pityingly down on him.

The heavy lids quivered and opened. Wilfred Egerton, his dark eyes burning with fever, gazed up at her.

Hope, faintly startled and confused, drew back a step as she met them. In the course of her short and secluded life, at home and at school, she had naturally met few men. During her visit to Meadowlands she had made the acquaintance of a good many, but as yet she had never met any one with eyes so deep and dark and beautiful as those of Wilfred Egerton's. Indeed, they were always the first feature noticed in his face. For a moment he stared up at her, the dark, irregular brows drawn and frowning with physical pain. Then slowly a light of recognition once more awoke in them.

"You helped me—the other night?" he said, his voice weak and hoarse.

"Last night," she said gently.

"Last night——"

His head turned restlessly on the pillow, and Hope's ears caught a muttered sound, which her charity vainly endeavoured to construe differently. She felt that she was beginning to make acquaintance with a hitherto unknown side of masculine humanity, and for a moment she thought that both Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Wilfred Egerton were very wicked young men. There was a slight severity in the fair young face as she proceeded to carry out Mrs. Page's instructions.

Perhaps the wounded man noticed it, as he lay watching her unpack the basket.

"Last night only?" he said. "It seems days ago. It is enough to make a man——"

His eyes closed again, and he went deadly pale.

Hope ran to his side. She moistened his lips with brandy. The unorthodoxy of his language was forgotten. The motherhood in her, that lies, or should lie, at the heart of the veriest child-girl, took possession of the suffering, helpless man, ministering to him as naturally and as simply as if the wide difference in their positions—he the man of the world, who had drunk the cup of life to its dregs, and she the inexperienced girl just out of the school-room—no longer existed.

She arranged his pillows and persuaded him to eat a few mouthfuls of jelly, placing all that he might require within reach, and bathed his aching head with the eau-de-Cologne Mrs. Page had sent.

He revived wonderfully. His voice grew stronger. He insisted on sitting up, and confessed with a laugh—which, though weak and hoarse, recalled to Hope the description his mother had given of it—that the reason he was in so exhausted a condition when she came in was that, half-mad with his caged and helpless condition, he had risen and walked about, only to find himself, the strength of impatient fever burned suddenly out, in a state of complete prostration.

Hope reproved him with the most delicious little air of austerity for his folly.

"I won't do it—if you'll promise to come again—soon," he said, lying back like a tired child on the pillows.

Then something which he had hitherto overlooked struck him.

"I wonder you could do it." He looked at her with a kind of mingled wonder and

bitterness. "It wasn't worth it—that mouldy, rotting old passage—and—of course," with that faint, hoarse laugh again, only with the amusement left out of it, "you know——"

She flushed.

"Of course——" he closed his eyes for a moment. "They were all awfully good to me, weren't they?" looking up at her again.

She was shocked and repelled by the ugly sneer in the pale mouth.

"Oh," he said in a softer note. "But you don't know. If there is a hell upon earth for a man, it is in finding himself dependent on the goodness of those who hate him."

"How can you say that! Your mother——" with passionate indignation.

"Ah, yes—mother!" an indescribable change in his voice and smile. "I can guess what she——" he closed his eyes and turned away his head a little.

Hope gave him all the tender messages his mother had sent, and explained why none of them had been able to come back to him. She knew that Gilbert and Mrs. Page had been with him the previous night. They had gone to him after the last guest had retired to rest, and stayed until the house had been taken possession of by the police that morning. Gilbert, who knew something of surgery, had done all that he could do for his brother.

But Wilfred had no message for him.

"Tell mother I'm all right," he said, as Hope, who had stayed longer than she had promised to do, prepared to start back through the old passage. "And she's not to fret—and poor old Page, too, and you." His dark eyes rested on her face, and again she flushed faintly, though she was growing accustomed to the admiration of men. Then a queer look crossed his face. "Don't you bother to come either. That mouldy old passage is enough to frighten a girl out of her senses."

Hope, knowing it was bad for him to talk so much, hurried away. It was not till she had passed through the heavy door, and allowed it to close behind her, that she remembered her lantern.

Her first impulse was to return for it; but she was afraid of disturbing the patient again. And, after all, she could not lose her way.

It was not a pleasant thought, however, that of traversing the noisome, suffocating darkness of that underground passage. To stumble along, guiding herself by her

hands, all the time shrinking in repugnance from touching those slimy, fungus-spotted walls.

Fancies full of horror seized her as she crept along. What if there were rats! She had heard of them haunting underground dungeons. Hungry rats! They had been known to attack men in the dark——

No—she must not think of such things. But surely the air was growing heavier—darker. Suppose, by chance, the means by which it was even thus scantily ventilated were cut off—suppose anything went wrong with the spring and Mrs. Page could not raise the door, and she were shut down there, till——

She stumbled against the archway at last! It was time. She felt choking. The air was growing unbreathable. She crept through the low archway, unconscious of the bruises she had received as she fell against the edge of the arch, driven by an overmastering desire for a breath of fresh air. She could endure no more.

She reached the iron ladder. All about her was pitch darkness. The trap-door was still closed.

What was Mrs. Page doing? Had she forgotten? It was cruel to keep her there. Burning fingers seemed to be clutching at her throat; lights began to flash and dance before her eyes; an iron band was closing about her temples.

Her lips parted. No—she had promised not to call. She must wait till they came for her.

The dark, sad eyes of Wilfred Egerton seemed to be looking entreatingly at her through the darkness. She could not see them, but she could feel them. How they were staring at her!

She gave a little choking laugh—and then her father stood by her.

"I mustn't call, father," she said, only, curiously enough, she did not hear her own voice, though she felt that she was speaking very loudly and distinctly, "because of Wilfred Egerton."

Her father's face grew dark and fierce, and then it vanished.

Hope lay unconscious at the foot of the ladder. She had kept her promise, and Wilfred Egerton was saved.

She came to herself with the summer air playing on her face.

She opened her eyes languidly. She was lying on the soft turf in the cool shadow of a great beech. Her face and hands were wet.

Gilbert Egerton was kneeling beside her, and was in the act of dipping her handkerchief again into an old-fashioned bowl holding water.

He looked seriously disturbed. Otherwise he was bathing her hands and face with a most professional gravity and dexterity.

"You had better not sit up yet," he said, his usually rather slow voice quickened into actual energy.

She had made a sudden effort to rise. But her head was swimming. He put out his arm hastily and caught her as she sank back. Half unconsciously she rested against him, and now that his immediate anxiety was over, it began to dawn upon him that there was something rather agreeable in the position so far as he was concerned. Besides, during the last half-hour he had been forced to reform his previous opinion of her. But, unfortunately, an opposite conclusion was slowly forming in the confused thoughts of the pretty head resting against his shoulder. An annoyed conviction took shape in Hope's mind that she had been very silly, and in its train the revolt of a woman's fastidious reserve at finding herself in such a position, and she suddenly raised herself from the encircling arm. She was close to the old summer-house. He saw the astonished question in her face.

"There is another way out of the passage," he said, methodically wringing out the handkerchief and flapping it in the hot sunshine. Then he spread it out on the turf to dry. "It is hidden among the rocks." Then he explained.

Dornton had entered the housekeeper's room just after she had left it.

Rightly or wrongly, Mrs. Page had been convinced that he suspected something. She did not dare turn him out, fearing to confirm his suspicions, and he was so pleasant and agreeable that she could find no reason good enough for summarily getting rid of him.

At first she trusted that he did not mean to stay long, for he made no attempt to sit down. As ill luck would have it, however, the butler came in to ask if she were ready to see the servants, and by an apparently careless question of Dornton's, the butler betrayed to him the fact that she always saw them at a certain hour on this day, to pay their wages and make any alterations she thought fit in her management. Dornton begged her not to let his presence disturb her, and sat down in the

very arm-chair placed over the secret entrance to the underground passage. Mrs. Page was beside herself with terror and anxiety, both for Hope and her young master. She was more and more convinced that Dornton's presence there now was not accidental. It was wit against wit. The slightest change from her usual routine might be fatal. She did not dare do more than give the detective a pretty decided hint that he was in the way. He blandly ignored it. She dared not be openly rude to him, for Mr. Egerton had given her, as well as the rest of the household, stern orders not to disobey or interfere with him in any way, so terribly sensitive he was on the subject of the police having suspected that it was in his house that the criminal was being sheltered.

The fact of having to hide from her master, as well, the presence of the fugitive there, made her position still more difficult. The least thing might rouse his suspicions, too. Hope must be sacrificed. Her only consolation was that the girl would assuredly return to the secret room should she find it impossible to wait in the passage. She did not dare think of the possibility of the girl getting terrified and calling for help. But all the time she was transacting her business the dread of it haunted her.

Dornton stayed on. He took out his note-book as he sat there comfortably at ease. By-and-by he fell asleep.

As soon as she had finished her business she went to find Gilbert Egerton, leaving the detective still peacefully slumbering. She hurriedly explained to him the state of affairs, and then returned to the housekeeper's room.

Dornton was still there asleep. He seemed scarcely to have stirred, and she began to hope that she had, after all, been mistaken, and that his presence there had been accidental, after all.

In the meantime, Gilbert Egerton had hurried to the rescue of Hope. He had entered the passage by an entrance under the summer-house. He had found her insensible at the foot of the ladder. He did not explain how he had carried her from there out into the open air.

But Hope's imagination filled in the details. Her gratitude for his help was chilled by the feeling that she must have given him a good deal of trouble, and a very great sense of irritation that it should have been Mr. Gilbert Egerton of all men to whom she was indebted. But genuine

vexation at her own want of heroism soon overpowered all else.

"I was so afraid," she said truthfully, when he politely made some remark about the closeness of the air. "I was horribly afraid. If it had not been for your brother I am certain I never could have done it. It did not feel so nice, being 'a heroine,' as I used to think it would be," rising with a half-shamed laugh.

But his face had grown black as thunder.

"You shall not be allowed to sacrifice yourself again," he said, in a voice she could hardly recognise as his.

She stared at him, startled and curious; then the burning, unhappy eyes of the wounded man seemed to be looking at her again, and she could think only of his need and sufferings.

"How can you be so hard-hearted, Mr. Egerton?" she exclaimed breathlessly.

"Oh, I believe you hate your brother!"

"I sometimes think I do," he said.

He had come only a short time before from a visit to Eason. The man was unconscious, and the doctor had little hope of his recovery. Should he die——

But he forced his thoughts from the possibility. It touched the complications of his brother's position with a still more lurid light.

"Eason was one of our best friends when we were boys," he said deliberately. "He gave us our first lessons with rod and gun. There was not, I do believe, a thing we could have asked that he would not have done for us then, or afterwards. He has been one of my father's most faithful and devoted friends and servants."

She stood looking at him, her face still pale with the act of heroism she had performed so simply; the sunlight falling through the foliage overhead, and playing beautiful and bewildering tricks with her hair, and shining into her eyes, as they gazed straight at him full of reproach and scorn. But as he went on, the passion of indignation in them changed slowly into something deeper—a look of horror.

"Mr. Egerton! Oh, how wicked you are! Do you mean to say that you believe your brother—shot—deliberately? Oh, I never want to speak another word to you; and I will not, if I can help it!" turning away with a gesture of illimitable contempt and loathing.

He stood there for a full minute with a curious blank look in his eyes.

It was an odd thing to think of out there, on that sunny, peaceful afternoon, in the English garden. But there came back to him the memory of the moment when, under a blazing Egyptian sky, the first shell with which he had ever made active acquaintance came screaming through the air, burying itself in the sand a few yards from him, and he had found himself covered with the blood of the man—his closest friend—who a moment before had been laughing at something he had said. For one instant earth and sky had seemed to melt into one blood-red, horrible haze, full of that shrieking of shells tearing through the air, and for that one instant he had asked himself where the good of it all came in. What was the value of a man's courage, and honour, and rectitude when one of those shells came crashing through flesh and bone, and left him only a mass of bloody clay?

The thought had passed in a second, and the next he was ready to fight with the best of them.

The blackness of that moment of despair, cowardice, blasphemous scorn, seemed to touch him again. Only instead of the death-cry that had choked the laughter of his friend, he heard the contempt and horror in the voice of the little girl whose presence under his mother's exclusive roof had roused first merely a languid surprise. It was only when the storm and rush of conflicting feelings—that stirring of his soul to its depths, which can transform a man into a hero or a coward, according as the circumstances or his own peculiar idiosyncrasies determine—had subsided, that he was able to collect his thoughts and follow her.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"YOU admire it, Mrs. Romaine? It strikes you as true? Ah, but that is very charming of you!"

A confused babel of voices—that curious, indefinable sound which is shrill, though its shrillness would be most difficult to trace; harsh, though it arises from the voices of well-bred men and women; and absolutely unmeaning—was filling the two rooms from end to end; and the soft light diffused by cleverly arranged lamps fell upon groups of smartly dressed women and men equally correct in their attire on male lines. It was about five o'clock, not a pleasant time on a gusty, sleety November afternoon if nature is allowed to have her own way; but inside these rooms it was impossible to do anything but ignore nature; the air was so soft and warm—faintly scented, too, with flowers—and the colour so rich and delicate. The rooms themselves were a curious hybrid between the fashionable and the artistic; that is to say, they were not arranged according to any conventional tenets, and there were various really beautiful hangings, "bits" of old brass, "bits" of old oak, and "bits" of old china about. But all these, though very cleverly arranged, were distinctly "posed." The larger of the two rooms was obviously a studio; rather too obviously, perhaps, since the fact was impressed by a certain superabundance of artistic prettinesses. Charming little arrangements in hangings, palms, or what not, "composed"

at every turn with the constantly shifting groups. The unconventionalism, in short, was as carefully arranged as was the attitude of the host of the hour as he stood leaning against a large easel, mysteriously curtained, talking to Mrs. Romaine. He was a painter, and a clever painter; he had married a clever wife, and as a result of the working of their respective brains towards the same goal he had become the fashion. "Everybody" went to "the Stormont-Eades' affairs," whether the affair in question was a little dinner, a little "evening," or a little tea-party—Mrs. Stormont-Eade always affixed the diminutive; consequently everybody was obliged to go; a fact which if carefully thought out will lead to some rather curious conclusions. And the little tea-parties, particularly in the winter, were considered particularly desirable functions. One of these tea-parties was going on now.

Mr. Stormont-Eade himself was a tall, good-looking man who had nearly succeeded, by dint of careful attention to his good points, in conveying the impression that he was a handsome man. He had fine eyes, really remarkably fine, as he was well aware, when they were earnest, and they were looking now with a deep intensity of meaning, which was their normal expression, into Mrs. Romaine's face; his mouth was not so admirable except when he smiled, and consequently his thin lips were slightly curved; his figure was too thin, and the touch of picturesqueness about his pose and about his velvet coat redeemed it; but his closely-curling hair was cut short and trim, and showed the excellent shape of his head to the best advantage. He had come up to Mrs. Romaine only a minute or two before at the conclusion of a song; a very little very fashionable music was

laughter never ceasing; put her into her carriage, and got in himself.

"Home!" she said sharply to the coachman. The door banged, they rolled away into the darkness and the wet, and her voice stopped suddenly.

They rolled along for a few minutes in total silence. Shut up alone with her like that, the isolation and quiet following so suddenly on the crowd and noise of a moment before, Falconer's only conscious feeling was one of almost stupid discomfort. Her sudden silence, too, had an indefinable but very unpleasant effect upon him. At last he said with awkward displeasure:

"I was going to write to you! I——"

She lifted her hand quickly and stopped him:

"When we get in!" she said in a quick, tense voice. "You can come in? It is just six. It need not take long."

"I am quite at your service."

She leant back in her corner with a sharp breath of relief, and neither moved nor spoke again until the carriage drew up at her own door.

She opened the door with a latch-key, and moved quickly across the hall to the foot of the stairs, motioning to Falconer to follow her. Then she stopped abruptly and turned. A servant was just crossing the hall to the dining-room, where the preliminary preparation for a dinner-party could be seen.

"Is Mr. Julian in?" said Mrs. Romaine sharply.

"Not yet, ma'am."

"If he should come in before I go to dress tell him that I am engaged."

She turned again and went on to the drawing-room.

"Now!" she said in a breathless peremptory monosyllable, facing Falconer as he shut the door. All trace of artificiality had dropped away from her, scorched away, as it seemed, in the fire of her intolerable suspense. Scorched into nothingness also was that subtle influence which Falconer's personality had always seemed to exercise over her. That strange defiance of him, that determined repudiation of all connection with him, except on the most trivial grounds, had vanished utterly. It was as though a woman conscious of a drawn sword hanging over her head should fight against and passionately deny the reflection of her danger in an onlooker's eyes until the sword had fallen; then, at very death-grip with the supreme reality, should pass beyond the

power of any lesser fear or pain to chill or touch. She did not attempt to sit down herself or to invite Falconer to do so. All her senses seemed to be absorbed in the hard, desperate anxiety with which her face was sharp and haggard. She looked ten years older than she had looked in Mr. Stormont-Eade's studio. Falconer answered her directly with no preliminary formalities, but with stiff disapprobation, as if such directness was involuntary on his part.

"I saw the—the young woman yesterday," he began; "but I was unable to bring about any arrangement. I gave her twenty-four hours for consideration, and this afternoon I called to see her again."

"Yes, yes!"

"I found that she had left the house this morning, leaving no address."

"Left!" The erect, tense figure confronting him staggered back a step as though a heavy blow had fallen upon it, and Mrs. Romaine caught desperately at the back of a chair. "Left—and you don't know where she is? You've settled nothing? We've no hold over her!"

The words had come from her in hoarse, gasping sentences, each one growing in intensity until the last vibrated with an agony of very despair, but Falconer's face grew grimmer as he listened. How it was he could not have told, but a strange, uncomfortable remembrance of the girl he had seen on the previous day, which had haunted him at more or less inopportune moments ever since, seemed to rise now and accentuate all his usual antagonism to the woman who was talking of her.

"I think you need not distress yourself," he said stiffly. "Perhaps I had better tell you at once that your son knows no more of her whereabouts than we do."

The drawn look of despair relaxed on Mrs. Romaine's haggard face; relaxed into an agony of questioning doubt.

"Doesn't know?" she said sharply.

"Julian doesn't know?"

"The landlady of the house," continued Falconer, "a very unpleasant and loquacious woman, was eager to inform me that on the arrival of your son yesterday afternoon, about an hour after I saw the young woman, there was a quarrel between them—that he left the house in anger. To-day, very shortly before my arrival, he returned and was astonished to find that the young woman was gone. He demanded her address, and was furious to

find that it was not known. I think there is no room for doubt that the young woman has left him!"

The colour was coming back to Mrs. Romaine's face slowly and in burning patches, and her clutch on the chair was almost convulsive.

"Left him!" she said under her breath. "Left him!" There was a moment's pause, and then she said in a harsh, high-pitched, concentrated tone: "Do you mean—for good? Why? Why should she?"

"I am sorry to have to say it to you," said Falconer slowly, but repelled from the woman to whom he spoke by the remembrance of the woman to whom his thoughts would return, "but I fear the case against your son is even blacker than it appears on the surface. I think it more than possible that he deceived the young woman."

The slowly-formed conviction—and it became conviction only as he spoke the words—was the result of that vague and disturbing impression made on Falconer on the preceding day by "the young woman." It had worked slowly and almost without consciousness on his part, but it had refused to die out, and it had attained the only fruition possible to it in his last words.

"And you believe that she is really gone? That there is nothing more to fear from her?"

It was the same absorbed, intent tone, and her eyes, fixed eagerly on Falconer now, were hard and glittering. The terrible significance of his words, with all the weight of tragedy they held, seemed to have passed her by, to have no existence for her. It was as though the sense in her which should have responded to it was numbed or non-existent. And Falconer, scandalised and revolted, replied sternly:

"I think you need have no anxiety on that score. She has disappeared of her own free will, and your son, upon reflection, will probably be glad to accept so easy a solution of what he doubtless recognises by this time as a troublesome complication." There was a rigid and utterly antipathetic condemnation of Julian in his voice; he had judged the young man, and sentenced him as vicious to the core, and for all his experience, he held too rigidly to this narrow conception to consider the possible effect upon youth and passion of so sudden and total a thwarting. "My only fear,"

he continued, "is that serious injustice has been done. The young woman is by no means the kind of young woman I was led to believe her. I have grave doubts as to whether it was not our duty to enforce a marriage upon your son, instead of negating the suggestion."

The words were probably rather more than he would have been prepared to stand to had they been put to a practical issue, and he had spoken them, though he hardly knew it, more from a severe desire to arouse what he called in his own mind, "some decent feeling" in the woman to whom he spoke, than from any other reason. From that point of view they failed completely. It was a bright light of triumph that flashed into Mrs. Romaine's eyes as she said quickly, and in an eager, vibrating tone, which seemed less an answer to him personally than to the bare fact to which he had given words:

"Fortunately there is no more fear of that."

The tall clock standing in a corner of the room chimed the three-quarters as she spoke, and she started as she heard it.

"It is a quarter to seven," she said. "And I have people to dinner. You have nothing else to tell me, have you? Nothing to advise?"

"Nothing," was the grim answer.

"You do not think—would it be a good thing, do you think, to have the girl traced so that we could always be sure?"

"You need take no further trouble in the matter, in my opinion. If you should observe anything in your son's conduct to revive your uneasiness, the question must, of course, be reconsidered. You will observe him closely, no doubt."

There was a moment's curiously dead silence, and then it was broken by a strange half-laugh.

"No doubt!" said Mrs. Romaine. "No doubt!"

Another pause, and then she turned and glanced at the clock.

"I must go," she said. "Thank you."

She held out her hand, and he just touched it as though conventionality alone compelled him.

"I have considered myself bound in duty in the matter," he said stiffly. "Good night!"

No touch of artificiality returned to her manner even in dismissing him. It remained hard and practical. Her intense absorption in the subject of their interview did not yield by so much as a hair's breadth,

and she remained absolutely impervious to any thought of the man before her. His slight, cold touch of her hand, the sternness of his obvious condemnation of her, were evidently absolutely unobserved by her.

"Good night!" she returned; and as he left her without another word, she crossed the room rapidly and went upstairs to dress for dinner, with no change whatever in the eager, concentrated expression of thought that had settled on her face.

The dinner-party of that evening was unanimously declared by the guests to be quite the most delightful Mrs. Romaine had ever given. The dinner, the flowers, all the arrangements, were perfection, of course; but even when this is the case the "go" of a dinner-party may be a variable or even a non-existent quality; and it was the "go" of this particular occasion that was so remarkable. All component parts of the party seemed to be animated and fused into one harmonious whole by the spirits of the hostess and host. Mrs. Romaine was so charming, so bright, so full of vivacity; Julian, who put in his appearance only just before the announcement of dinner, was so boyish, so lively, so ingenuous. He was a little pale when he first appeared, and the lady he took down to dinner reproached him with working too hard; but as the evening wore on he gained colour. The relations between himself and his mother had always been quite one of the features of Mrs. Romaine's entertainments, but those relations had never been more charmingly accentuated than they were to-night. Julian's manner to his mother was delightful; at once light-hearted and tender—easy and deferential. And her treatment of him was the half-mocking, half-caressing treatment, which paraded the very fact it professed to hide.

Until he came gaily in among her guests that evening, Julian and his mother had not met since that second interview which had prompted her summons to Falconer. Julian had dined out on both the intervening evenings, and it was easily to be arranged under these circumstances, if either of the pair so willed it, that forty-eight hours should go by without their coming in contact with one another. And an onlooker aware of the circumstances of their last meeting, and watching the mother and son through the evening now, might have reflected that the laws of heredity seldom operate exclusively through one parent.

"Good night, dear Mrs. Romaine! Such a delightful evening! How I do envy you that dear boy of yours! It's the greatest pleasure to see you two together."

The speaker was a good-natured old lady, and she had thought it no harm to put into words what her fellow-guests had only thought. She was the last departure, and Mrs. Romaine followed her to the top of the stairs, with a laughing deprecation of the words which was very fascinating, and then turned back into the drawing-room with another "good night," as Julian prepared to attend the old lady to her carriage.

The hall door shut with a bang, and then there was a moment's pause. The mother in the drawing-room above and the son in the hall below stood for an instant motionless. A subtle change had come over Mrs. Romaine's face the instant she found herself alone. It had sharpened slightly, and an eager, haggard anticipation was striving to express itself in her eyes, only to be resolutely veiled, and her expression did not change at all as she stood by the fire waiting. But to Julian's face as he stood with his hand still resting on the hall door there came a great and sudden alteration. All the light and gaiety died out of it before a wild, fierce expression of rebellion and distaste, repressed almost instantly by a pale, sullen look of determination. He moved, and Mrs. Romaine hearing his step moved slightly also; he came up the stairs, and as he came he seemed to force back into his face the easy smile it had worn all the evening.

"It's been a great success, hasn't it, dear?" he said lightly as he crossed the drawing-room threshold.

"A great success!" she said in the same tone—though in her case it rang a little thin.

An instant's silence followed, and then she laid her hand airily on his arm. Her lips were white and dry with agitation, and she knew it; she wondered desperately whether her voice rang as unnaturally in Julian's ears as it did in her own as she said with what she meant for perfect ease:

"Dear boy, let us say our final words upon that wretched business to-night and wake up clear of it to-morrow. May I be happy about you? That's all there is to be said, isn't it?"

She tried to smile, but she knew the effort was a ghastly failure, and again she wondered whether Julian saw. She need

not have feared! Julian was busy with his own histrionic difficulties, and had neither sight nor hearing for her.

"You may be quite happy, little mother!" he said, and the frank tenderness of his tone and manner were only very slightly over-accentuated. "I've made up my mind to do as you wish, and I won't make such a fool of myself again!"

They were standing close together, looking each into the other's face, and he patted her hand as it lay on his arm as he finished. Yet between them, parting them as seas of ice could not have parted them, there lay a shadow beneath which love itself survives only as the cruellest form of torture; the shadow of the unspoken with its chill, unmoveable dead weight against which no man or woman can prevail.

The hand on Julian's arm trembled a little. The terrible presence, which is never recognised except by those to whom its chill is as the chill of death, was making itself vaguely felt about his mother's heart. She let her eyes stray from his face with a painful, tremulous movement, and her fingers tightened round his arm.

"It is all over?" she murmured in a low voice. "It is all over, really?"

As her self-command failed her his seemed to strengthen. He patted her hand again reassuringly and said confidently:

"Yes, dear, indeed! I've only got to beg your pardon, and I do that with all my heart."

He stooped and kissed her tenderly, and as he did so she seemed to rally her forces with a tremendous effort. She returned his kiss with a pretty, effusive embrace, though her lips were as cold as ice.

"I grant it freely," she said. "And if I've felt obliged to be—well, shall we say rather autocratic?—for once in a way, you must forgive me, too, eh?"

But the unspoken, terrible reality as it is, was to be touched by no such ghastly travesty. Julian's laugh was only a firmer echo of his mother's gay artificiality of tone, but as she heard it her lips turned whiter still.

"That's of course," he said. "Of course."

"Then it's all settled!" she responded gaily. "We'll draw a veil over the past from to-night, and behave better in the future. Good night, dear boy!" She kissed him again, patted him lightly on

the shoulder, and moved away. On the threshold she stopped, turned, and blew him a kiss over her shoulder. "Forgiveness and oblivion from to-night," she said; and there was a strange, defiant gaiety in her voice.

With another smile and a nod she went upstairs, and as she went her face grew lined and drawn, like the face of an old woman, and the defiance that lurked in her voice stared out of her eyes, half-wild and reckless.

NAVAL MISADVENTURES.

OF naval disasters due to the superior prowess of an enemy the record in our naval annals is happily not very extensive, but it is quite otherwise when we come to speak of misadventures in which, if the winds and waves play a part, the element of human maladroitness is not wanting. "There are worse misfortunes at sea" expresses in popular form a recognition of the perils of the deep, but when it comes to misfortunes in harbour, in sheltered roadsteads, and in calm summer seas, we may expect to find that somebody blundered over the business. The earliest annals of our navy, as well as the latest, are not altogether barren of such incidents. Almost as soon as a regular navy was established, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, down went the choicest vessel of the fleet, and this was the "Mary Rose," described as "the noblest ship in Christendom and the flower of all ships that ever sailed." She lay at Spithead awaiting the attack of a powerful French armada, her ports all open and her guns cast loose. It was a lovely day, and the roadstead was smooth and calm, when a puff of wind from the land heeled the vessel over, her guns ran over from the windward side, her heavy top-hamper pulled her down, and over she went, and sank to the bottom, with her captain, Sir George Carew, and a crew of four hundred men. At Spithead, too, in 1703, the "Newcastle," line-of-battle ship, sunk at her moorings with great loss of life, and in 1782 was sunk the "Royal George," almost at the same spot, and under much the same circumstances as the "Mary Rose." The vessel was heeled over in order to clean her copper sheathing:

A land breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was overset;
Down went the "Royal George"
With all her crew complete.

And with her crew were drowned many visitors from shore, who were making merry 'tween decks with Jack Reefer and Tom Bowline, so that the poet's count of "twice four hundred men" was rather under than over the number of the drowned.

Disasters from fire and explosions form a lugubrious category of their own. We may begin with the "Edgar," a fine seventy-four-gun ship just returned from American waters, in 1711, which blew up in Portsmouth Harbour, with great loss of life, few escaping out of a crew of eight hundred men. Cruising off Corsica in 1794, the "Ardent," sixty-four guns, took fire and blew up, with the loss of all her crew of five hundred men. In the same year the "Impétueuse," line-of-battle ship, was burnt and blown up in Portsmouth Harbour, but most of her crew escaped. In the following year the "Boyne," of ninety-eight guns, suddenly took fire at Spithead, while moored in the midst of the Channel Fleet. The crew jumped overboard and were mostly saved by boats from other ships and the shore. The ship's guns were all loaded and shotted, and, as the fire gained a mastery, they went off one after the other, and as the burning ship drifted from her moorings, and with the flood-tide made for the harbour-mouth, she carried before her consternation and dismay. Fortunately the great ship grounded on the sands off Southsea, and soon blew up with a report that shook all Portsmouth to its foundations. The death-roll of twenty souls included two seamen of the "Queen Charlotte," killed by a cannon-shot from the burning vessel.

In the following year, 1796, the "Amphion" frigate was making good defects in Plymouth Sound, lashed to a hulk alongside. All was festivity on board, the captain was entertaining brother-captains from other ships. The ward-room officers also had a dinner going on, and it is thought that there were more than a hundred guests on board, of all ranks in life. An observer describes how the "Amphion" of a sudden appeared to rise in the air till her keel came into view, her masts were shot upwards into the air with a débris of timber, iron, and human remains; next moment there was nothing left of the "Amphion" but dense wreaths of smoke and a tangle of floating wreckage. Yet the first lieutenant was saved with fifteen of the crew, blown into the water uninjured, and of the visitors a little child, hurled from its mother's arms,

who had been shattered to pieces by the explosion.

This was an era of explosions, for not long after, in 1798, the "Resistance," forty-four guns, sailing in Malaysian waters between Sumatra and Borneo, was struck by lightning, when her magazine exploded and she was totally destroyed, while twelve of her crew were saved out of three hundred. The survivors were made prisoners by the Malays, and experienced many sufferings and adventures before they found themselves again under the British flag.

A terrible disaster, too, occurred to the "Sceptre," sixty-four guns, which lay at anchor in Table Bay in 1799. There had been much fêting and feasting between the ship's officers and the residents at Cape Town, and the guests had hardly gone ashore from a supper and ball on board the "Sceptre" when a howling gale came up from the north-west with a heavy sea, so that the "Sceptre" began to drag her anchors and drift towards the shore. Adding to the imminent danger, a fire broke out, and the ship blazed fiercely while she drove helplessly before the wind. The flames were only quenched in the boiling surf in which the gallant ship struck and went to pieces, within sight and hearing of those who had gathered on the shore to render what aid they could. Forty-seven of the crew struggled ashore, or were dragged out of the surf, but the captain and two hundred and ninety seamen and marines, between fire and water, miserably perished.

Cruel, too, was the loss of the "Queen Charlotte," a fine line-of-battle ship of one hundred guns, a sister ship to the "Royal George," which had experienced such a sad fate just eighteen years previously. For it was in 1800 that the "Queen Charlotte" formed part of Admiral Lord Keith's fleet in the Mediterranean, and she was lying off Leghorn when she took fire and burnt with such rapidity that only one hundred and sixty-seven were saved out of her crew of eight hundred and fifty men and officers. The captain, when last seen, was tranquilly making a report of the occurrence to the Admiral in command, of which he gave several copies to seamen, begging them to save themselves if possible, and their despatches.

The next great loss by fire was that of the "Ajax," a fine seventy-four-gun ship, which had shared in Rodney's victories and in the great Battle of Trafalgar. She was

with Duckworth's fleet in the Dardanelles in 1807, when she took fire, and blew up off the island of Tenedos, with a loss of two hundred and fifty men. We shall have to pass on to the year 1864 to chronicle another fire loss, that of the "Bombay" line-of-battle ship, off the port of Monte Video, happily not attended with loss of life. Then we come to the year 1881, when the "Dottrel" blew up in the Straits of Magellan, when only twelve men escaped out of one hundred and fifty.

Another class of misadventure may be termed bull-headed; where a ship not under stress of weather, or disabled by mischance, runs full butt against some well-known rock or island or inhospitable shore. The Scilly Isles, for instance, have long been well known to navigators, and yet, by some gross blunder in navigation, in the year 1707 Sir Cloudeley Shovel's fleet ran against them, and the "Association," the "Eagle," the "Romney," and the "Firebrand" were dashed to pieces, with a terrible destruction of the lives of braveseamen. The "Colossus," line-of-battle ship, ran against the same islands in 1798, and was lost, but nearly all her crew were saved. A more striking instance of bull-headedness was the unhappy loss of the "Ramillies," in 1760. Her sailing-master, thinking that he was entering Plymouth Sound, ran right against the mighty Bolt Head Cliff on the coast of Devon. A narrow rift in the rocks called Ramillies Cove to this day, marks the grave of the ship and of seven hundred men whose bones lie fathoms deep beneath the waves. Again, a fine ship, the "Venerable," Lord Duncan's flagship at the battle of Camperdown, plunged ashore in fine weather against Roundam Head in Tor Bay, and became a total loss, but with a death-roll of only eight men.

A misadventure of the same class was the loss of the "Anson" frigate. She had sailed from Falmouth on Christmas Eve, 1807, to take her station as look-out frigate in the chops of the Channel. The weather became so rough and dirty that her commander bore up for Falmouth, but mistook the Land's End for the Lizard Head, and ran ashore by Loo Pool on the Cornish coast. A tremendous sea was running, and captain and officers were drowned, and about sixty men. But a good many managed to crawl ashore along the mainmast, which had broken off, and formed a perilous bridge over the worst of the surfs;

and some of these were pressed men, who took to their heels as soon as they were ashore, and were heard of no more. But heroic exertions were made from the shore to rescue the survivors. One Roberts, of Helstone, swam through the surf with a rope and was the means of rescuing many; and a brave Methodist preacher struggled through the surf and rescued several women who would otherwise have perished. A similar misadventure befell the frigate "Pomona," in 1811, which on a fine night in October, running up Channel, found the Needles in her way, but though the ship was lost, her crew was happily rescued. A peculiar loss was that of the "Alban" cutter in 1812, which rolled on shore near Aldborough, because it was surmised that her crew were too much intoxicated to keep her off. Anyhow, the commander, his wife, and all but one of a crew of fifty-six men, were drowned within reach of shore.

For a similar example to the last we shall have to go back to the loss of the "Blanche Nef," Anno Domini 1120, when the heir to the English Crown was drowned off the Norman coast, one fine summer's day, the commander and crew having drunk too freely before leaving port, and running the ship upon some well-known rocks.

Another naval disaster which left its mark in history happened Anno Domini 1191, when the English fleet, bound for the Crusades, was driven by a furious tempest on the coast of Cyprus. The ships were plundered by Isaac Commenius, the ruler of the country, who for this was deposed by our King Richard, who took Cyprus into his own keeping, though he gave it away before long. Richard's subsequent shipwreck in the Adriatic on his return from the Holy Land, an event which led to his captivity and subsequent events, perhaps hardly comes within the compass of naval annals.

But a disaster in which the heir to the Crown was concerned, was the loss of the "Gloucester" in 1682, which struck on the Lemon and Ore Sands, off Yarmouth, with the Duke of York on board, the future James the Second, and a great retinue of nobles, knights, and gentlemen. All discipline was at once lost, and a mad rush was made for the boats. The Duke crawled out of his cabin window into a skiff which his attendants had secured at the sword's point. Two hundred persons perished in the waves, among whom were many of rank and fortune.

A fruitful cause of disaster to the navy of other days was the exposed character of many of its chief havens. A volume almost might be filled with an account of the shipwrecks in Plymouth Sound alone before the completion of its noble breakwater. Sunken transports, East Indiamen driven ashore, were incidents of almost every heavy gale from south or south-east. In 1760 the "Conqueror," a seventy-four-gun ship, was driven on Drake's Island and wrecked, her crew saved. And in 1811 the "Amethyst" frigate was wrecked off Mount Batten in Plymouth Sound, now as safe a berth as could be desired, but where the "Pallas" frigate had been wrecked before.

An unlucky name was the "Pallas," for the next frigate that bore it was wrecked on the Scotch coast near Dunbar, with her consort the "Nymphe," the greater part of their crews being saved. And on our own home shores we have the wreck of the "Brazen" off Newhaven in 1800, which strewed the Sussex coast with dead bodies—of which many are buried in Newhaven churchyard, where an obelisk marks their grave and records the disaster. Only one man was saved out of a crew of one hundred and five officers and men.

The tension of the incessant blockade which the English fleet maintained against almost every European port during the ascendancy of the great Napoleon, is shown in the long list of disasters that chequers the naval annals of those times. In wild and bitter weather the "Proserpine" frigate was wrecked off the coast of Jutland, and in the midst of drifted ice, over which the crew escaped to the shore. A party, consisting of master, surgeon, boatswain, midshipman, and two seamen, made their way back to the ship to save what they could of her stores and their own belongings. Next morning the ice had disappeared with a shift in the wind, and with it the ship, supposed to have broken up and gone down, and the party of adventurers. The missing men were reported as lost, but found the number of their mess again. They had got on board the frigate, when she was carried off with the ice-floe in the gale. The ship drifted before the wind till she was driven on the opposite coast, when the party, a second time shipwrecked, managed to escape with their lives. Off the same coast was wrecked the "Crescent" frigate in 1808, when the captain and two hundred and twenty of the crew perished, out of two

hundred and eighty. And in February, 1811, the "Pandora" frigate struck on the Scaw reef in the same waters, when twenty-nine of the crew perished from cold and exhaustion. Here, again, the name proved unlucky, as an earlier "Pandora" had been lost in the South Seas in the search for the "Bounty" mutineers.

A still more terrible disaster occurred off the same coast in a north-west gale in November, 1811. The "St. George" battleship, with the "Defence" and another frigate in company, were conveying a fleet of merchant ships to English ports, when the "St. George," crippled by a recent disaster, was driven ashore. The frigate escaped, and the "Defence" might have followed her; but the captain refused to alter his course. "He had received no signal to part company," and he sacrificed his ship, his own life, and the lives of his crew to this Roman spirit of discipline. Only thirteen were saved of thirteen hundred and fifty, officers and men, in the two crews.

If the rocks of the Scandinavian coast were fatal to our British seamen, so also were the sands and shoals of Holland. In 1799 a fine frigate, "La Lutine"—originally French—was lost off the Texel with all hands, and a quantity of treasure, which is still, perhaps, buried in the sands. In the year 1803 five fine frigates were cast away while doing duty in this trying "Channel Patrol." And in 1804 the "Apollo" frigate was lost off the coast of Portugal with forty of the West India fleet.

A terrible wreck was that of the "Athénienne" near Tunis in 1806. She struck on the Shirki rocks, the existence of which had been denied by the captain, who triumphantly exhibited the chart to his officers. "If there are any Shirki rocks we are atop of them;" and so it proved, for next moment the vessel struck, and a terrible "sauve qui peut" ensued. The captain and three hundred and forty-seven others perished, while a hundred and twenty-three were saved in the ship's boats. In contrast to the above was the wreck of the "Dædalus" on a shoal off Ceylon in 1813, where perfect discipline was maintained in the midst of peril, and every soul was saved.

To return to the narrow seas and the Continental blockade in which perished, in 1810, the "Minotaur," battleship. She went to pieces on the Hook's bank, off the

Texel, with the loss of four hundred and eighty of her crew. In the following year the "Hero" frigate, with many merchant ships under convoy from the Baltic, was cast away and lost on the same treacherous coast. The "Manilla" frigate shared the same fate in 1812, but her crew saved themselves on a raft of barrels. In the same year the "Centinel" frigate was lost with sixteen of the Baltic convoy off the Island of Rugen.

In the service of the Channel blockade perished the "Satellite," sloop of war, lost off Cape La Hogue in 1810. The ship vanished one stormy night, and not a soul was left to tell the tale out of a crew of over a hundred men. The "Laurel" frigate, in too eager pursuit of an enemy's ship, ran ashore off Quiberon, and became a total wreck, some of her crew escaping to the shore, where they were made prisoners, while others were rescued by the boats of her consort.

But while the blockade exacted enormous sacrifices in material and the lives of men, it was marvellously effective in its results. Napoleon, then almost supreme in Europe, visiting the Channel ports, saw with leonine rage the extreme limits of his dominion. At Havre he found the harbour deserted, grass growing on the quays, the horizon without a sail—except the odious English fleet which lay there, watching in the roads just out of cannon-shot. Napoleon turned angrily away and hurried from the spot.

Yet during the continuance of the naval war, from 1794 to 1813, we lost, by wreck and misadventure, twenty-five first-class ships and numerous smaller craft, and upwards of six thousand seamen, to say nothing of the losses in transports, hired vessels, and privateers, losses which far exceeded any inflicted by our enemies.

But the period that followed the conclusion of the great war was marked by the repose of a long peace, and little was lost where little was risked. The wreck of the "Alceste" in the Malay Archipelago in 1817 with Lord Amherst, the British envoy, on board, belongs to the pleasant record of adventure familiar to our youth, in which discipline and courage combined bring safety to all concerned. Of the same character was the wreck of the "Megæra" in 1871, when the crew found refuge on the desolate island of St. Paul. Earlier examples in the same instructive series are to be found in the adventures of the crew of the "Wager," wrecked among the

Patagonians in 1741, and of the survivors from the "Litchfield," man-of-war, lost on the coast of Barbary, numbering two hundred and twenty in all out of a crew of three hundred and fifty, with their captivity among the Moors, and various strange adventures. Still more familiar is the recital of the wreck of the "Antelope" on the Pelew Islands in 1783, and the return of Captain Wilson with the son of the island chief, who excited much curiosity in English society as Prince Lee Boo. And there is a spice of romance about the loss of the "Thetis" frigate, in 1830, with nearly a million dollars on board, off Rio de Janeiro.

But among sad misadventures must be told the wreck of the "Arab" sloop off Westport, County Mayo, in 1823, with a crew of a hundred all swallowed up in the raging sea, and of the "Avenger," one of the earliest of our steam frigates, lost off the African coast near Tunis. Then perished Lieutenant Marryat, the son of the great naval novelist, and only Lieutenant Rooke and three others were saved out of a crew of two hundred and fifty men. Again, we have the "Orpheus" frigate wrecked in 1863 off the coast of New Zealand, with a loss of one hundred and eighty-six in officers and seamen.

Coming to our modern fleet of iron-clads, we have to record the awful fate of the "Captain" in 1870. She was of the latest design in turret ships, of four thousand two hundred and seventy-two tons displacement, but with only four feet of freeboard, and thus she literally ploughed her way through the deep. Her designer, Captain Cowper Coles, was on board; her captain, Hugh Burgoyne, a promising son of the old Field-Marshal, was proud of his ship, and had every confidence in her powers. It was a rough and dirty night in the Bay of Biscay, and those on board the flagship lost sight of the "Captain's" lights in the mists and wrack of a rising gale. When morning dawned the ironclad was nowhere to be seen, but fragments of her wreckage soon gave sad evidence of her fate. Yet there were survivors of the catastrophe. In the middle of the night a huge sea had struck the ship and heeled her over; the captain was on deck with the watch, they were all waist-deep in water, and they felt the ship heaving beneath them as she struggled to right herself. But over she went, turning right over; the shrieks of the stokers in their martyrdom of fire and scalding steam

being heard over the roar of the elements. Bottom upwards the ship floated for some minutes, a sufficient time for the poor souls imprisoned within her to realise the horror of their fate. Those on deck had a chance for life, and soon the captain, the gunner, and an able seaman found themselves clinging to the keel of the pinnacle. Then out of the gloom appeared the ship's launch, which a number of seamen had scrambled into. "Come, sir, let us jump," said the seaman on the pinnacle to his captain, taking him by the hand. "Save yourself, my man," said Burgoyne; and the man jumped and was hauled on board, but nothing more was seen of the captain. The survivors, eighteen in all out of five hundred, made for the shore, and landed safely, and came home to tell the tale.

Another sad story is that of the "Serpent," lost in 1890 on the coast of Spain, only three being saved out of a crew of one hundred and seventy-five. And in 1887 the "Wasp" gunboat disappeared in the China seas, lost, it is supposed, in a typhoon. In a like mystery is involved the fate of the "Atalanta" training ship, which sailed from Bermuda on the thirty-first January, 1880, with two hundred and eighty souls on board, and was never afterwards heard of. Another fatal disaster to a training ship, the "Eurydice," occurred off the Isle of Wight some years before.

Our more recent brood of sea monsters has not escaped its misadventures. The fate of the "Vanguard" will be remembered, run into and sunk by the "Iron Duke" in a fog off Wicklow Head in the year 1885. Happily the ship was kept afloat for an hour by her water-tight compartments, and all her crew were rescued. In 1886, when in Lisbon Harbour, the "Sultan," in changing her position, sent to the bottom a merchant steamer, thirty of the crew of which were drowned. The "Minotaur" also dragged and fouled the "Monarch," and among the crush of iron pots the fragile shells of ordinary shipping seemed likely to suffer. The "Sultan" herself was wrecked and abandoned in 1889, but was raised and floated in the following year, and she still occupies her place in the Navy List. It was touch-and-go with the "Swiftsure" in 1885 on a sandbank in the South Atlantic, but she came off, and is now guardship at Devonport. The "Victoria" run aground in Greek waters in 1892, but was got off

without irreparable damage. In the same year the "Naiad" and "Apollo," fine cruisers of the modern type, ran against the Skelligs in the course of the naval manœuvres, but were skillfully floated off again. Then we have the recent grounding of the "Howe," a fine first-class battleship, in the entrance to the port of Ferrol, with a satisfactory sequel in the news of her being floated into port, though not exactly with a whole skin. As we must have these iron monsters and must send them cruising about in narrow waters, like whales in a tub, and in all kinds of weather, and must have them manœuvring in line and in column, and playing at the risky game of follow-my-leader, after the ancient fashion of line-of-battle ships, we cannot expect to be altogether free from such occasional misadventures.

FROM FAIRYLAND ONWARDS.

To what extent our early reading influences us later on is a question which has sometimes occurred to me with interest. We must all, I suppose, have skimmed through some thousands of pages which have left little or no impression behind them; but on the other hand, how often does the merest suggestion carry us back to some familiar story of our childhood, out of the associations of which the old likes and dislikes which were wont to be so arbitrary and so unreasoning, spring up unbidden to influence our present judgement!

Yet for nothing in the world would we part with these youthful traditions, around which the intervening years have but shed an additional glamour. The foundation-stones are they of our fancy's castle; the firm rocks on which we found a footing when first we sought an outlook over the sea of literature.

Not that our attitude towards them remains unaltered. Few of us, I imagine, would care to read over from beginning to end even the most cherished of our fairy-tales, unless indeed they came to us in such tempting guise as does the *Sleeping Beauty* of Tennyson. It is the memory of them we love. In spite of pantomimes and burlesques—all we have seen of them for years—they retain their corner in our hearts, and the original charm, to which, as we have said, distance has lent her enchantment, still hovers about their names. Let a Millais but choose Cin-

derella for the subject of his Academy picture, and we crowd around it in eager expectation. "Where is the mouse-trap?" we say. "Ah! there lies the pumpkin." We like upon occasion to refer to

Little Snowdrop, who lives in the glen
Over the hills with the seven wee men,
to Red Riding Hood pulling the bobbin that
the latch might lift, or to those pretty Babes
who no burial from any man receive.

I myself, personally, must confess to a weakness besides for divers other less known inhabitants of fairy-taledom. Little Hilda, for instance, who went out in the snow to look for the strawberries, for the want of which her sick friend had declared she must die. Into the forest, through the deep drifts she plunges, and lo! all of a sudden the air is mild, the trees are budding, and the birds begin to sing. Here is the little forester, clad in green, awaiting her by the lake in his boat drawn by swans. Swiftly he will pilot her into the presence of the king of all the swans, who will give her fresh luscious strawberries for the sick one, and glittering ruby ones for herself.

Why is the sea salt? Let me tell you; I know the answer so well. Is it not because the last owner of the fairy mill gave the command,

'Mill, mill, grind away,
Some fresh salt now, I pray!'

and forgot to leave orders as to when it should stop?

My only acquaintance with Tales from the Norse was derived from a copy, by reason of much handling and conning, tattered and dog-eared to the last degree, which after my time went to pieces altogether. But what joy it was to read in it of Shortshanks, whose little boat—which he carried in his pocket—grew and grew as he put his finger, hand, or arm into it, till at last it was big enough to hold himself! To this day, when I am starting on an expedition I sometimes find myself apostrophising the agent of locomotion—be it horse or steam-engine—in Shortshanks's magic words: "Off and away over high hill and low dale, and don't stop till you come to the King's castle!" It savours of Hans Christian's "Fliegende Koffer," you may say. True, but then I knew Shortshanks first.

Another of the Norse Tales, Dapplegrim, is to be found, I fancy, under a different title in Brothers Grimm. Dapplegrim was a young horse which went careering wild and free over the country along with a

score of like companions. He it was alone, with his strong limbs and surefootedness, who was to succeed in climbing the glass hill and freeing the princess who sat at the top.

Once, in later years, I caught a glimpse of a Dapplegrim, but her men called her Sylvia. It was in a far country where horses were plentiful, but no matter how much satisfaction one's mount might be giving one there would always be a chorus: "Not like Sylvia! Nothing to Sylvia!" Ah, it was Sylvia that was fleet of foot, strong in the wind, firm-knit, beautiful!

"Who is Sylvia? What is she
That all our swains commend her?"

sang I; but Sylvia, they told me, was out with the mob, and I might or might not have a chance of seeing her.

One day I was riding with a friend along a road which traversed a flat, open plain. In the far distance we could distinguish a dark, moving mass, ever, as it seemed, increasing in magnitude; while at the same time a dull, rumbling sound made itself also increasingly heard. It was the mob.* Oo, on they came. Tramp, tramp, tramp! Clatter, clatter, clatter! Down into the bed of a creek, splash through it; bob, bobbing appeared their heads and shoulders on the near side.

"They are making fair for us; they mean to run us down!" I shouted in dismay; but my companion merely smiled.

"Keep a tight hold on your reins," he said; "the temptation to join the mob is too much for some horses." So a tight hold you may be sure I kept.

In the meantime, all together, straight as an arrow they made towards us. Nearer and ever nearer till within some twenty yards of where we had pulled up, then, as if moved by a single impulse, off they turned sharp to the left and dashed at full gallop across country.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted my companion after them; and, catching the enthusiasm:

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted I.

"You noticed her, of course?" he asked me after a minute or so.

"Her—who?"

"The mare, to be sure—leading, by a

* During winter in the Colonies, all the horses about a station not required at that season for work are cast loose to forage on their own account; and being gregarious by nature, they attach themselves to others from neighbouring stations, forming together a goodly band, which is known as the "mob."

full length too, by Jingo! That was Sylvia!"

Head in the air, nostrils dilated, mane flying to the wind, her beautiful shaggy coat glancing in the wintry sunshine—yes, I had noticed her. But at the same time my thoughts went back, back through the long years, across mighty oceans and wide-spread continents, back to the old attic nursery, the blazing fire, with its tall wired guard, and the broad window-seat on which lay the tattered, wide-margined, large-printed, loosely held together leaves of the old Norse Tales, and I knew that at last I had seen Dapplegrim!

There are some praiseworthy persons who have kept, or have had kept for them, diaries, records of all their doings from an abnormally early age, and can therefore tell us precisely at what period of their life this, that, or the other phase of thought was upon them. I, unfortunately, am not one of these. I have no means of ascertaining, and hence comparing notes about it with others, the exact chronological order in which Charles Lever, Walter Scott, Marryat, Dickens, captivated my fancy. I know that at one time the acme of happiness in my estimation was reached when I had begged successfully for a half-holiday, and had purchased a three-half-penny dreadful, the illustration on the front cover of which was invariably a group of feathered Red Indians—presumably on the war-path. Once, the fun of the "Widow Malone Ohone" was inimitable, and Ballantyne's "Coral Island" the finest thing in print. Not so long ago I seized eagerly upon a copy of the last-named, thankful to have got something into my hands which I knew to be worth reading. Alas, alas! what a fall was there! In the lapse of time the fine gold had changed to clay. Nevertheless, if generation after generation of children continue to derive from it the intense enjoyment that the "Coral Island" afforded to me, then indeed was the book not written in vain.

How well do I remember my first assault on Walter Scott! An enthusiastic brother set me down to "Ivanhoe" in one corner of the library, while he himself skimmed eagerly the pages of the "Talisman" in another. But the print was small and the matter heavy; the birds were calling without, and the scented summer breezes played temptingly about the open window, and I could, could not get over my third page. Oh, how I tried! With what determination did I attack those puzzling

sentences, for I would on no account go on without carrying the sense along with me, and the idea of skipping, I believe, never once entered my head! It was such a fine, grown-up thing to be doing, and I was such a little, little girl! But as it proved I was too little, for, after all, it went over me to compass that page.

The time could then not have been far distant, however, when Gurth and Wamba, Rebecca and Rowena, Cedric the Saxon and Sir Sluggish Knight, were to become household words for me; even now, I suppose from the fact that they were amongst my earliest favourites, there seems to be poetry in the very sound of their names.

I must confess that in my line were no Daisy Chains, Queechys, Schönberg Cotta Families. At the time when these were due I was no doubt immersed in the prankish doings of Midshipman Easy, in the triumphs of that cool customer the Green Hand, or the delightful horrors of the Cases of Circumstantial Evidence as given in "Chambers's Miscellany," where you are treated to the details of bonâ-fide trial after trial, in which the innocent were condemned and put to death, the truth only transpiring too late.

But, well-a-day, how old names and old favourites crowd in when one begins to cast about for them! What of Eva and Saint Clair, Topsy and Tom, Eliza on the ice with Jim Crow in her arms? Of the Ugly Duckling and the Master Thief? Of "Robinson Crusoe" and the infinitely weaker "Swiss Family Robinson," which does not stand reading nowadays as does its great model? Here we have Alice in Wonderland, all Dickens—from David Copperfield to the Marchioness, from Fagin to Little Nell—and the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." Then "Undine," "Peter Schlemihl," and "The House of the Seven Gables."

Who is it that hovers about us when we have locked ourselves out from our goods and chattels, and are searching fruitlessly for the key? When we are gazing upon the leaps and tumbles of a woodland stream, or the angry wavelets on the surface of a wind-swept lake? Is it not Undine? And Undine again when we come across—as we do sometimes—a maiden bright as she is beautiful; but alas! all light and no heat, one in whom the human soul is still an unknown quantity.

Undine, liebes Bildchen du!
Seit ich zuerst aus alten Kunden
Dein seltsam Leuchten aufgefunden
Wie sangst du oft mein Herz in Ruh!

Peter Schlemihl rises before us whenever a particularly sunny day draws attention to our more than usually conspicuous shadow; ay, and in his metaphorical aspect he crops up besides at sundry other times and seasons. While as for "The House of the Seven Gables," is it not a poem rich in delicate touches, in exquisite detail, and at the same time in broad, tragic shadows and fateful meanings?

I shall end off here with another favourite—my last I suppose it must have been, before a distinct full stop was placed on one period of my life by my departure for school to that region which we are sometimes wont vaguely to designate as "abroad." "The Count of Monte Cristo," I know now, is all wrong in its morals. Let him be never so much the agent of divine justice, the Count, in his poison lessons to Madame de Villefort, for example, goes a trifle beyond what we can comfortably allow a hero whom we intend to go on respecting to the end of the last volume to indulge in. Nevertheless, the book abounds in tit-bits. The Château d'If, the Abbé Faria, entering the grotto, Noirtier, the meeting with Countess Mercédès, Caderousse's death, etc.—I could fill a whole page in merely instancing the thrilling episodes of Dumas' masterpiece.

I shall never forget the unexpected distinction which my acquaintance with this book brought me amongst my Continental schoolmates. Quite innocently, in conversation with one of them, I had happened to mention it, but the effect was electrical. What! was it possible? "The Count of Monte Cristo"! I had read, actually read that! In the course of a few hours every girl in the school knew of it; my class-fellows crowded around me to make quite sure by personal enquiry that there was no mistake, while the older girls—who before had scarcely deigned to notice me, and the most senior of whom was only as a special favour allowed upon occasion to dip into translations of Walter Scott—even went so far as to invite me to walk with them in the garden. Thus much, at any rate, did my early reading stand me in good stead on this my first sally into the great world.

DONEGAL SKETCHES.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

COUNTY Donegal is, to the average Englishman, quite as much "terra incognita" as India or South Africa. I will

not say it is as rough and interesting as those other parts of our little globe. In some respects, however, it is probably rougher and more interesting than either of them. Those who know what they are talking about tell us that the cliffs to the south of the county are not to be beaten for grandeur anywhere in Great Britain; and on the other hand, for downright wretchedness, you must search the world to find families to compare with the Irish under Bloody Foreland and between Gweedore and the Atlantic.

I dare say, on the strength of Western Ireland's reputation for "soft" weather, it was rather a mad thing to do; but the other day, finding myself in Donegal town, I studied the map for a while and there and then determined to tramp the coast-line of the county as long as my easiest pair of boots would hold out. The hotel to which I had been seduced was a mean affair. It seemed likely that accommodation would degenerate rather than improve as I got into the wilds. But I was a thought reckless. It should hinge on the weather the next morning. If the day opened reasonably fine I would accept the omen. If it rained my plan should go to the wall.

Having made this arrangement, I went out to find the points of Donegal town. There was no one in the hotel to instruct me. A single little damsel, about fourteen years old, seemed to run the house. True, outside, in the diamond—as they call their market-places in the shire—there was a large-limbed man in loud check leaning against some cars, with his eye constantly upon the hotel. I was given to understand that he was the landlord, though I interchanged not a word with him. Even when, later, I rang the bell in a pet because the leg of the arm-chair would insist on going through the floor of the room, it was the little girl who appeared. I could have been angry with the proprietor, but with this humble little piece of consistent industry by no means.

Donegal is not much of a place, barring its diamond, which is immense, and its bay, in which the yachting ought to be admirable. You look from the slip of a quay across a mile or more of still water, with green hills bounding it, and pretty green islets studding it. There is an old abbey on a bluff commanding the pool, with graves innumerable, and grass—just ere haymaking—about six feet high. If the Donegal commonalty would but respect

this burial ground it would be a delightful place. As it is, one has to move among the tombs with a distressing amount of precaution. There is also an ancient ruin in the lower part of the town. It is called Donegal Castle for the sake of euphony. Really, it is an Elizabethan manor house in decay, and a remarkably picturesque one. The score or two of conventional hovels at its base on the other side of the river are singularly mean by the side of it.

Well, as luck desired it, the morrow was bright enough, with a strong wind from the east. I settled my bill, therefore, which was moderate, arranged for the transport of my luggage, including my fishing-rod, and began a walk, which, ere the fortnight was out, had grown to the respectable total of two hundred miles.

My programme bade me reach Killibegs that afternoon. The distance is about eighteen miles. It is as undulating as all Donegal high-roads, so that one may respectfully apply to it and the county the words from a Lake District "Visitors' Book":

He surely is an arrant ass
Who pays to ride up Kirkstone Pass;
He'll find in spite of all their talking.
He'll have to walk, and pay for walking.

The people were haymaking in the town's vicinity, and very sweet was the country air. Hereabouts you have no suspicion of true mountain scenery. The road is bordered with hawthorn hedges, and not a few attractive villa residences are to be seen. But at Mount Charles, some four miles west, the change begins. This little town is wonderfully situated, looking down upon a network of waterways between the headlands of this part of Donegal. The views always beneath them ought to elevate the minds of the townspeople. But it does not appear to have much effect upon them. The first person I met in the place was a mendicant, who seemed delighted to inform me that "there's niver a divil of a fellow in Ireland more wretched than me, yer honour." This with a contented grin.

It blew great guns from here onward, and the southern sea was dark under the clouds. I passed a little lake with a heath-clad knoll to it which looked tempting. But the waves on it would have rocked a Thames house-boat, and so I did not regret my fishing-rod. Here at length I came out of hedgerows. Peat-bogs and morasses showed themselves, with the grey shapes

of the mountains inland. Irish cottages of the locally approved type became plentiful—with pigs, ducks, and geese, poultry, tethered calves, and human bipeds all in sweet communion therein. The coarse red legs of the women and girls were quite shocking to see. There were also many dismantled houses, with nettles and foxgloves thick on the parlour floor, telling of the decrease of Donegal's population from two hundred and ninety-six thousand four hundred and forty-eight in 1841 to one hundred and eighty-five thousand two hundred and eleven in 1891. The domestic cat is much to the front in Donegal homesteads; and a miserable-looking beast it is.

I did not rest until Dankineely, eleven miles from Donegal, was reached. The village is but one longish street, which was this day rather populous with operatives from the railway line which was being constructed with British relief money from Donegal to Killibegs. Here some Guinness and bread-and-cheese was to be had, and nothing else. The tavern-keeper was civil enough to invite me into his drawing-room while I regaled myself. My surroundings ought to have humiliated me. It was the strongest anti-English atmosphere I had breathed in Ireland. There were engravings of the "Leaders of the Irish Nation," ancient and modern, upon the walls. Among the latter Archbishop Walsh was noticeable in the middle of the group and Parnell stood defiantly to the left. For a few minutes also I dipped into a National History of Ireland, "for the use of schools," and had my blood chilled as I read of the odious iniquities of the English against the poor down-trodden land in which I was. The language of the book was almost treasonably strong. I imagine that the relief railway in the neighbourhood—Government grant about one hundred and twenty thousand pounds—is the best gift Dunkineely has had since it became a parish. But the compilers of these books "for the use of schools" are unmindful of England's benefactions. Her tyrannies overshadow them all.

Two o'clock found me at Killibegs, the last hour having been spent along its pleasant bay. Here at any rate I was getting into the heart of the country. It is a really pretty place, with broken land behind it, and hills fifteen or sixteen hundred feet high yet further behind. For yachting shelter it is of course notorious; and the authorities still hope that the

Government—especially the new Government—will be of their opinion, that there can be no better harbour of refuge in the north-west—when a little money has been spent upon it. Meantime, it means to bid for tourists and anglers with right good will. Though only some seven or eight hundred inhabitants strong, it has three hotels, two very decent, in which for half-a-crown a traveller may dine to his contentment. Just at present it was very busy with salmon. Every other day or so the local agent sent a few hundredweight of the fish across to Sligo in a smack. The source of supply is twofold. First, from Mr. Musgrave's fishery at Teelin Bay, some ten miles distant; and secondly, from the poachers. The mail car itself is not above carrying a fish or two which are not of respectable lineage. All this drain on the water at the mouth of the famous Glen river of Carrick is vastly prejudicial to the interests of men who visit Carrick to fish. It explains the tale that was told me of an enthusiastic sportsman who whipped the river for two months not long since, and caught but one salmon in the time. On the other hand, after rains, you may still do well in the Glen. Three salmon in an evening was the record one day last July of a gentleman connected with one of the Government relief works in the district.

I stayed two days at Killibegs, satisfied with the soothing, pretty place. There was some election fuss going on, and voters came in from the country in their best black and with their hats cocked over their eyes in rather a mischievous manner. But they had umbrellas instead of bludgeons, and were content with badgering distasteful speakers instead of breaking their heads. It was all settled for them. They were to vote "athraight for the counthry," and in due course they did it. The weather kept very kind. As the Killibegs river, the Bangosteen, was too low to promise sport, I took out the hotel boat and we sailed away to the lighthouse at the mouth of the bay. It was all very well going, but no joke tacking home under a scorching noontide sun. We saw old women picking seaweed, and were offered it at a halfpenny a handful. It seemed to me that if Nature meant us to eat such stuff, she would have made it a thought more palatable. Between edible seaweed and shoe-leather the difference is but due to the respective thickness of the materials. The poor women were grateful for a

pollock or two which we had caught with a strip of note-paper on a hook.

On the third day, which was cloudless, I sent on my traps to Carrick, and took to the road again. There is some lovely country just west of Killibegs by the sandy bay of Fintragh, pretty hillocks in Irish confusion, with rocks and flowers littering them. To-day the haymakers had all these knolls in hand, and truly they could not have had better weather for their work. The mountains of Crownardd and Croaghacullin behind were a hot purple. The blue peat-smoke rose straight from the pale yellow hovels up the hill-sides, set, it seemed, as much out of the way of the civilised road as they could get. A politician on a horse passed me, also bound for Carrick. In the evening he rode back again, having had quite enough of the Carrick boys, who deprived him of much self-respect.

At Kilcar, which is deep in the mountains, I might have had a fling on the river, though it was very low. "It's a free stream, entirely," I was informed by a ragged fellow with a rolling eye who was mending his breeches by the roadside, "ready for the illiction, sorr." His wife and he were not, he observed, "on speaking terms" that day. A frugal luncheon of bread and butter and milk in this dirty village was at any rate enough to aid me on towards Carrick. A constable fishing for sand eels, to catch pollock with, volunteered an opinion of the people very adverse to Kilcar; and I was not surprised later to come upon the car of the Land Commissioners, which had been coaxed up the new Carrick road—a bed of stones—towards a pack of misery-smitten cottages. This Teelin Bay district is one of the most congested in the county, and the revision of rents here has been disastrous to the landlords. But it is also a wonderfully picturesque part of the world. For here begins the Donegal cliff scenery, at which a man may exclaim "Oh!" and "Ah!" to his heart's content.

I quite expected to have to take pot-luck at the famous Carrick Hotel. Visions of four sleepers in a room came to me as I walked up the Teelin Glen, with the magnificent hindside of Slieve League on the left, an experience far from uncommon in the hotels of the Scotch Highlands during the holidays. But here, in the Donegal Highlands, it was no such thing. I was offered an extensive choice of sweetly clean bedrooms, and was told that,

save the two gentlemen on the Land Commission, I was the sole visitor. The elections were made responsible for this slight to Carrick. It was election business also which, on this particular afternoon, gave the Carrick fair a touch of interest out of the common. A Parnellite orator was on a cart in the middle of the little village, and among pigs, sheep, old clothes sellers, and some really pretty girls, "in town" for the day, was execrating England and the English in the usual style. But the Donegal farmers and peasantry—with the Land Commission lowering rents every day in their midst—were not very inimical to England. They hustled the orator, who was an exceedingly foolish sort of politician, and finally chevied him back to Killibegs, the police looking on with their hands in their sides, much diverted.

At the Carrick Hotel you pay ten shillings a day or three guineas a week for accommodation—and get it. This includes fishing rights on the Glen river and the lakes on the Musgrave property. Mr. Musgrave, whose shooting-box is just above the hotel, in a bleak but bracing situation, is a landlord in good odour with his tenants nowadays. Anciently it was different, but now no one has anything to say in his disfavour. As I have hinted, the salmon in the Glen river are nothing to what they were ere Teelin Bay was worked so vigorously. The landlord's income from the sea-fishery may be reckoned roughly at about two thousand pounds, which is better than a multitude of Irish tenants with "revised rents."

The evening of my arrival, after dinner, I took my rod among the rocks of the Glen. Some of the pools of the river were sweet to look upon, and the trout could be seen leaping at the flies in a lazy fashion. In these pools, even in the more degenerate days of the river's fame, you may get a salmon if you have luck and patience, though the weather has been fine for a week or two. For my part, I am fain to confess that I did not do very well. I tried three of Rogan's most attractive flies, and offered them in my best style—not saying much—to small purpose. It was no great fun pulling out little fish which ought to have been put to bed by their nurses at that late hour. The midges, too, grew distracting. People who do not know Ireland imagine that it is not visited by these representatives of the eleventh plague of Egypt. They should try Donegal

in fine summer weather. I was told by an angler here how they lost him a really nice salmon. He had played the fish, and was about to land it, when the midges came about his then unprotected face in such hordes that he dropped rod and gaff and applied both hands to himself instead of the fish. Master salmon used his opportunity, and was heard no more of.

And so home in the gloaming, with honeysuckle and meadow-sweet odorous from the thick undergrowth on the western side of the stream. The lane near was populous with lasses returning from Carrick's mild fair festivities. They talked with rare Irish zest as they strode along barefooted, dropping me civil greetings by the way.

The following morning opened with most engaging tokens. From my bedroom I looked at the swelling buttresses of Shieve League, and had no manner of doubt that it were a tempting of Providence not to climb those wonderful cliffs with such portents. There was little or no wind at the time—another great point for the man who means not to be deterred from tackling the One Man Pass; a picture of which some readers may remember in Mrs. Craik's account of her gentle roamings along the highways of Donegal a few years ago. If Mrs. Craik had been able to take the coast-line as I took it, I think her pen would have sent up the price of land throughout this picturesque, poor country.

Breakfast over I set forth. It was ideal haymaking weather. By no means good for fish though, except as they catch fish at Teelin. The boats could be seen out in the Bay, and I was told they were having rare sport of its kind. It was also whispered by a dilapidated, lean man with a squint, that the price for the "sly fish"—meaning the poached ones—had fallen to threepence a pound. At this rate the merchant of Killibegs would, no doubt, do well in the Manchester market, and, perhaps, even discourage Mr. Musgrave's hired men from exerting themselves overmuch.

Donegal is not a great land for beggars. After Kerry, indeed, it seems almost free from them. Here in the Teelin Bay district, however, sundry small beings braced themselves to me for social purposes, and gradually let their chatter drift in the direction of their pockets. "Oh, yis, they're fine tarties," said one little rogue when I complimented him on the produce of his paternal acres, "but we has to

pay mighty dear for them, indeed we has!" At a guess, I should say his father paid rent of one pound a year for his five acres of land, and this is what he called dear! The tales told by the Land Commissioners here rebound not inconsiderably to the Donegal Paddy's craft and wit, but do not denote any landlordian tyranny of the foolish kind. With a little more manual work the good fellow would be happy enough; and this, too, the benevolent British Government is providing for him. His rents are reduced by the Land Commissioners; and the congested district's gentlemen are helping him with fisheries and other labours, more or less good for the country, and certainly putting money into Paddy's pocket, if he likes to work for it. If only as much care were devoted to the English poor in England, what a happy, contented nation we should be! As for the Donegal Paddy, indeed, Paddy all over the land, he takes what he can get from us, and does not even pretend to be grateful.

From Teelin village—a straggling congeries of hovels by the Bay side, and up the hollows of the hills—I climbed towards Carrigan Head, the first of the series of coast precipices. It was a pleasure at last to get out of the range of the turf-cutters, who spoil the look of so many of the Donegal hillsides. The last of the huts was passed, with an ill-conditioned cur at my calves, for strangers are scarce in these parts. Then hey for the heather, the close-nibbled downs, the heights, and the unpolluted sea-breezes! Carrigan head is about seven hundred and fifty feet, as nearly perpendicular as the wear and tear of storms and waves upon a headland will let it be. I was in luck, indeed. The sea was glassy, with just a land breeze ruffling it. Beyond were Sligo, and even Mayo; below the sea-birds shrieked and sang as I looked down the gnarled and broken red precipices of this imposing promontory. The remains of a signal tower stand on a green protuberance of the cape—a relic of 1798, when we had to be much on guard against the French, with whom the local patriots were more than becomingly familiar.

But if Carrigan Head was so strong a sight, what shall I say of the Slieve League Cliffs, which were well in view after a few minutes' clamber along the edge of the precipices? Carrigan Head is seven hundred and fifty feet above the sea level;

Slieve League one thousand nine hundred and seventy-three feet. I declare I shall shirk the task of attempting to describe the latter. If my pen were to try a flight lofty enough to do justice to Slieve League, its career would summarily end. Vaulting ambition would be the death of it. But seriously, I have seen no finer sight anywhere in Europe, Africa, or America—such parts of each, at least, as my experience enables me to discuss. No doubt I was a bit favoured by the day, though there are those who say that the mountain and its seaward face are indescribably thrilling under thick cloud. That sounds rather Hibernian, but one understands their meaning. For my part, I know only that I laid myself down on the heathery cliff-edge of Banglass and stared at Slieve League's red and white tremendous precipices, till the nape of my neck smarted from the exposure to the sun. It is superb, nothing less. In future, when I yearn for the sublime, I shall hesitate a good deal between taking a ticket for Switzerland and just crossing from Holyhead to Dublin, and seeking the mail train to the north, which shall bring me into Donegal in much less than twenty-four hours.

The One Man Pass is the thing to see and try your nerve on at Slieve League. Wonders of this kind do not usually satisfy expectation. But Slieve League's curiosity is not to be sneezed at. The common local description of it is "a ledge of rock with a fifteen-hundred-foot precipice on the Atlantic side, and a very steep, clean slope to the east." This, as such descriptions go, is not much amiss. But the precipice is not perpendicular. A man might recover himself if he dropped on to it. As for the land side, I would take my chance there with a fair amount of confidence. Still, when all's said in detraction of the Pass, it is a ticklish sort of roof-line to creep along. Its width is about two feet, and it is composed of polished rock, slippery enough at times. Its length may be thirty to forty feet, and its angle of steepness about thirty to thirty-five degrees. In anything of a wind the Pass would be decidedly risky. As, however, there was but little wind to-day, I took my dose of peril without flinching, and after a very enjoyable little thrill got to the upper end. You may do it crawling or standing. As it was so fair a day I did it standing, without much additional risk.

Thence to the top of the mountain it is a tiring pull up a succession of edges, some

quite steep, and some rough. And at the top I just laid myself down on the lee-side of a bluff and drank to the peak in whisky, and afterwards broke my fast with sandwiches, and smoked a cigar, while I stared at the sea and the cliffs and the lighthouse of Rathlin O'Birne, a little to the north-west, and execrated the midges, who seemed to hold tobacco-smoke in complete contempt.

Slieve League is a mountain to "do." There can be no two opinions about it.

As the afternoon was waning I made briskly for the Malin Beg Cliffs, plunging down the heather slopes in great strides. After a wearisome five hours' move I found myself again at Carrick, an hour late for dinner. I had quite miscalculated the time it would take me to get over the rough mountain-land between League and Malin and Malin and the Carrick road. Certain grouse whom I disturbed hereabouts seemed much surprised at the sight of humanity; and well they may have been. Of Malin Beg I should like to say this: that, when Donegal is turned to account, it will attract a good many people for its pretty bay of sand. Here it was, on the cliffs adjacent, that Prince Charlie used to walk, looking for the ships that were to come and help him to the throne. He probably used much emphatic language on these breezy heights. My walk this day was rather over than under twenty rough miles.

"OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL.

CHAPTER IX.

DORNTON, admiring the view of the grounds from the terrace before the house, saw them return a little later together.

He noticed that Hope wore no hat and carried no parasol, though the afternoon sun was flaming down on lawns and paths.

He saw, too, that though on catching sight of him she made an effort to brace herself up, there was something fatigued in her air and step. The detective sauntered away as they drew near. For the first time his face showed some feeling.

"I didn't think it, but Gilbert Egerton is as big a cad as his brother, and Brown should know."

In spite of the difference of years and occupations, a very genuine liking and

respect reigned between the wealthy ex-tradesman and the detective.

Their acquaintance dated from some years back. It had begun professionally, Mr. Brown having had need of the services of Scotland Yard, and though they rarely met, the acquaintanceship had continued. But it was entirely one between themselves, for Mr. Brown had long ago begun to select a different set of friends and acquaintance for his daughter.

For this reason, lonely though he had been, he had kept her the greater part of the time at school, taking her abroad in the holidays, and half intentionally, half unconsciously, separated her from those with whom in her father's former position she would naturally have associated. Nor was it from mere vulgar ambition. His wife had been of a better social station than his own, and he had wished to lift her daughter back to it, while his own love for and pride in this beloved daughter tempted him to choose for her all that the world held best.

Dornton had never met her, nor had she the least idea that he was acquainted with her father. The young detective himself, there simply to carry out his professional duties, would never have thought of mentioning the fact. Nor would he, under any circumstances, have claimed an acquaintance with her. He measured perfectly the social gulf that now separated them, though had she remained in her father's former position, he might have been received on an equality by them.

But though he gave no sign, he found that his attitude towards Hope had its difficulties.

For there was a queer frowning look on his face as he recalled the girl's tired, sweet eyes.

Certain it was, that from that moment he had not the slightest desire to spare the pride and feelings of the aristocratic family, on which so great a disgrace had fallen. The only member of it for whom he still had the smallest sympathy was Mr. Egerton himself.

He made his way now to the library, where the latter was sitting. He went to announce his departure and the withdrawal of his men. Mr. Egerton's endurance, tried so severely, broke down at last. Humbled to the dust by the insult of the police in his house, he broke out into a paroxysm of rage. He stormed at Dornton, threatening to report him to the authorities, and never to rest till he was dismissed the force for

his infamous blunder. Dornton listened in silence.

"And I mean it, too!" exclaimed Mr. Egerton, a little later, as he described the interview to Gilbert. "I will write to Scotland Yard to-night, and what is more, if the scoundrel hadn't gone when he did, I would have horsewhipped him out of the grounds. I wouldn't have stood another hour of it! Thank Heaven, we have seen the last of him and his set."

But Gilbert Egerton scarcely looked relieved. How much information had that silent, keen-eyed man picked up during the day? And did this quiet departure mean defeat or victory?

He and his father were sitting over the fruit and wine after dinner. They had dined alone. Hope, pleading a headache, had stayed in her room, and Mrs. Egerton had still felt too unwell to come downstairs. The dinner had been rather silent. It was not till the servants left the room that Mr. Egerton had roused himself from a kind of listless heaviness, which had followed on that outbreak of anger in the library, to tell his son what had happened.

"How dared they come here?" he said, his face flushing purple again. "Haven't I done enough yet to show them that I have nothing to do with that——"

"I am afraid not, sir," said Gilbert very bitterly. "You see, he is always Wilfred Egerton."

He had never said a word to soften his father's anger against the first-born son. There had never been any love between the two brothers. They had quarrelled and fought as boys, and had grown up to hate and despise each other as men. The continued sense as of a great and grievous wrong had rankled in Gilbert's heart as a boy, and it lived on still, though in a different form, to-day.

As a child he had been passionately attached to his mother, and he had felt the difference in the love she gave him and that she lavished on his brother. As they grew older, and he and his brother drifted farther apart, his mother's heart went after the other son, and in her pity and grief for the erring, she became almost unjust to the one who had made no such claims on her devotion.

To Gilbert, as well as to his father, Wilfred's life had been a perpetual humiliation. He made no allowances for him. His mother knew this, and reproached him in her heart for being harsh and hard.

He had grown to-day accustomed to take the second place in her love. But he knew that he held the first in his father's esteem and affection; that it was a bitter regret to him that he had no power to leave the property to the son who would honour the old name, while that other who must inherit would bring upon the house only the shame of riot and recklessness, the ruin of unbridled extravagance, and the shadow of an already dishonoured name.

Gilbert his father trusted implicitly, with the simple faith of a man who is himself the soul of honour.

And now, at last, Wilfred stood between even them. This concealment of his brother, within their very gates, was the first deliberate act of deceit of which Gilbert Egerton had ever been found guilty towards his father.

As the elder man looked towards him now, with heavy, troubled eyes, the younger one cursed his brother in his heart. The flash of anger had faded from Mr. Egerton's face, and, as the lamplight touched it, Gilbert saw how old it had grown. The mask of pride and stoical endurance had fallen from it in this after-dinner talk with the son he trusted, and the pale face, usually rather stern, was lined and worn with suffering.

He had cast off his first-born, but not even Gilbert, until this moment, knew what it had cost him.

Instinctively, unconsciously probably, the young man rose, and going to his father's side, refilled his wineglass for him.

Mr. Egerton's hand, which had been stretched out to lift the decanter, fell back a little heavily on the table. It was trembling. His son saw it, and something rose in his throat as he sat down again in his own place.

His father, though outwardly he took no notice of his son's little act of service, perhaps vaguely felt the comfort of it.

"Thank Heaven I have you, Gilbert!" he said, in the curious heavy voice which was so different to his usual clear, decisive tones. "If I had discovered the smallest taint of his life"—all the horror and loathing he felt for his eldest son's wild career in his face—"in yours, I think it would have killed me. Perhaps it is because you have never lied to me, nor deceived me, nor tricked me, that I have come to set so much value on your truth. I can't tell you what, through all this horrible time, it has been to me."

which he had died half an hour after his discovery. From information given by his valet, who knew that his master had been to the bank that day, search was made, and the bonds in question, together with a valuable necklace of diamonds sent home that same day from the jewellers, were found missing.

There was considerable mystery about the whole affair. A woman was suspected to be mixed up with it, and though her identity was not yet established, a lady who bore a rather shady reputation in a fashionable shady set, was believed by the police to have been the closely veiled visitor who had called on Greenwood at his chambers the night of the robbery. So far, however, if this were the case, she had skilfully baffled the suspicions of the police.

To blacken the case against Wilfred Egerton, it transpired at the inquest that he knew his late friend had a weak heart. If, then, he had administered, or had had a share in administering, the chloroform, he was practically guilty of murder. Greenwood had only revived for a moment or two. He had muttered a few words, just caught by those who were trying to restore him to consciousness:

"Wilfred Egerton—bonds—stolen."

The dead man's valet deposed at the inquest that he had been sent, the evening of the robbery, by his master to some considerable distance on an errand that would keep him away some hours. His master had returned to his chambers, after dining at his club, and had sent his valet off at once. When the man returned about one o'clock, he found Mr. Greenwood insensible on the floor.

Though most of the evidence told considerably against Wilfred Egerton, it was not strong enough to convict him. He was let out on bail—two of his friends, who still believed in him, standing surety for a large amount. Dornton, though he had not imparted his suspicion to any one as yet, believed in his own mind that Lady Musgrave had something to do with

it, acting through one of the men who came forward.

Wilfred Egerton disappeared. Amid the scandal and doubt and anger his act roused, his cowardly flight, generally confirming public opinion of his guilt, a rumour was spread gaining a certain amount of credence, that his disappearance had something to do with the saving of a woman's name.

If he had stayed to stand his trial, a flood of publicity would have been thrown on the whole matter, which would have dragged others besides himself into notoriety.

When the morning came, Mr. Brown was still undecided as to how he should act. But a letter from Hope herself, telling him of a great trouble that had fallen on the house, comforted him a little. The letter was loving and truthful as ever. She said that until the Egertons gave her permission, she did not like to tell him all the facts of the case, but as soon as she was free to speak he should hear all about it. She did not mention Wilfred Egerton's name at all. She asked to be allowed to stay on as she seemed to be able to help Mrs. Egerton a little, but owned that during the last day or two she had been feeling very home-sick, and had been longing to see him.

"Now that Mrs. Egerton, who has been so good to me, is so unhappy, I do not like to leave her, but directly she can spare me, come for me, dearest father, for there is no one, after all, like our very own, and though I have had nothing but kindness here, I have missed you all through it!"

Mr. Brown felt that, so long as she could write to him such a letter as that, he need not fear for her truth and innocence.

A day or two later he heard of Mr. Egerton's dangerous illness.

He saw nothing more of Dornton, and as the days slipped by, and Wilfred Egerton remained uncaptured, he believed that for once the astute detective had made a mistake.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

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CHAPTER XXV.

It was a bright spring day; one of those days on which the freshness and renewal of life which only spring knows, and for the sake of which even the cold monotony of winter is endurable, seem to be in the very air, and to radiate with the light itself. Even in London, where nature's broadest effects, only, can be felt, there was a sense of exuberance which was almost excitement. The sun shone with a brightness which seemed to shed oblivion over past darkness. The air was quickening and stirring with vague and limitless possibilities.

It is rather a notable arrangement which makes the quickening of life in one of the least natural systems in the world, London society, simultaneous with nature's great awakening. It presents a suggestion of combined travesty, patronage, and unconscious testimony to that affinity between man and nature which nothing can wholly destroy, which, if it is worked out with a certain amount of latitude to a fantastic imagination, will have a rather bewildering effect upon the focus of things in general. But it is nevertheless a fact that on this particular day in May very many of the impulses stirring in nature had their strangely distorted counterparts in the impulses of society. Society, like nature, had discarded its winter garments, its winter habits; society, like nature, was restless with fresh beginnings, fresh hopes, fresh tendencies. The resemblance lay on

the surface; the contrast was farther to seek.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and a certain section of society—a gathering, at least, very fairly representative of a certain section—was surging in a good-tempered, aimless, demoralised way in a very fashionable church in Kensington. Some of the demoralisation was due to the occasion—a smart wedding—but the gaiety and the general air of readiness to be pleased which prevailed were as certainly the outcome of the wider spirit of the hour as were the smart spring gowns and the quantities of spring flowers carried or worn by the women. The bridal party had left the church and a general exodus was in progress; progress rendered rather slow by reason of the difficulties attendant on the bringing together of carriages and owners, and involving a considerable crush inside the church door. In the middle of this crush, allowing himself to be pushed and drifted along towards the door, was a man who was apparently too fully occupied in casting keen, comprehensive and reconnoitring looks about him, and in returning the gestures of greeting and welcome which returned his glances on all sides, to take much heed as to the manner or direction of the movement imposed upon him by the moving crowd. It was Marston Loring, and as he finally emerged into the air he was lightly clapped on the shoulder by Lord Garstin, who, a few yards in front of him during their compressed passage out of the building, had waited for him on the pavement.

"Glad to see you back, Loring!" he said. "Heard last night of your arrival. How are you?"

"Not sorry to be back," returned Loring nonchalantly, as he shook hands. "I've

come to the conclusion, though, in the course of the last half-hour that six months is a mere nothing!"

"Are you walking round to the house?" asked Lord Garstin. "So am I. Let me have your news as we go."

Marston Loring had spent the winter at the Cape. His departure had been alluded to among his smart acquaintances as "a sudden affair" more or less indefinitely connected in their minds with that "business" of which Loring was understood to be a devotee. To Loring himself it had been by no means a sudden thing. That is to say, the necessity for it had been gradually growing up about him in his professional life much against his will, though it had reached a crisis somewhat unexpectedly. He had been absent six months, and this was, practically, his social reappearance; but looking at him as he turned into the street with Lord Garstin, it would have been difficult to believe that he had been away at all; far less that he had passed through any striking experiences of men and life. His keen, cynical, unpleasant face was entirely unaltered; his manner was perfectly calm and unmoved. If he had his observations to make on his return, if the result of those observations was rather exciting than indifferent to him, interest and emotion were still entirely outside his pose.

The talk between the two men, however, as they passed along the streets was such talk as passes when one of the two is occupied in picking up dropped threads, and the other is well calculated and well satisfied to help him in the process. In his heart of hearts—if such a spot could have been reached in him—Lord Garstin would probably have confessed to little personal liking for Loring; his cordiality was the result of considerably involved workings of social politics. Just at this moment in particular, with the prestige fresh upon him of sundry smart magazine articles on Cape affairs which he had sent home from time to time, and which had been a good deal talked about, Marston Loring was distinctly a man to be noticed and encouraged.

Details connected with the wedding at which they had just assisted were naturally the first topics that presented themselves. It was Hilda Newton's wedding; she had been married with much circumstance from Mrs. Halse's house; and before Loring left England it had been said that she was to be married at Christmas at her own home

in Yorkshire. About a month before the day fixed for the wedding, however, the aunt with whom she lived had died; the wedding had perforce been postponed, and when it became possible to consider another date, Mrs. Halse—in the absence of any near relation to the bride-elect—had taken the matter in hand.

"A very nice affair she's made of it!" commented the elder man, as he finished his explanation, interspersed with discursive items of news of all sorts appertaining to society and its doings. "A little loud, of course; that goes without saying; and, really, nowadays it's rather the thing! A pretty girl in her way, Mrs. Compton. And talking of pretty girls, Maud Pomeroy looked well. They've been at Cannes since the end of January; only just back, like yourself."

"So I heard," answered Loring indifferently. "By-the-bye, I didn't see the Romaynes. Aren't they in town? I've not had time to look any one up yet, of course, but I thought I should see Julian to-day."

Lord Garstin paused a moment before he answered.

"They were there," he said. "I saw them come in. You'll see them at the house, no doubt. The little woman's been invisible for two or three days; ill—rather bad, somebody said."

"Ill!" echoed Loring; and there was a genuine surprise in his tone which no information yet bestowed upon him had evoked. "Really!" He paused a moment, and then said, with his own peculiar smile: "And how is Julian? Does the hard-working line hold out?"

Lord Garstin smiled, more pleasantly than Loring had done, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Pretty well, I suppose," he said. "I met his chief the other night, and he was not enthusiastic. He's a nice boy, though. You're a great chum of his, aren't you, Loring?" Loring nodded. "Then let me give you a hint to have an eye to his proceedings at the club. Cards are all very well, you know, but a boy like that should be moderate. You might be able to talk to him about it. I gave his mother a hint a few weeks ago. She's a nice little woman. See what you can do, will you? I've got an idea that the foolish fellow doesn't play only at the club."

They were close to Mrs. Halse's house as Lord Garstin finished, and his last words were spoken quickly and signif-

cantly. Loring answered only by a slight movement of his eyebrows, and then they were in the hall, being swept on by a seething crowd to pay their respects to the hostess and the bride.

"Loring, old man! How are you?"

Loring and Lord Garstin had been thrown together again after offering their congratulations, and they were standing side by side. Julian Romaine was close beside them, having come up from behind through the crowd unperceived, his hand eagerly, even demonstratively, outstretched.

Thinking things over in private later on, Marston Loring thought with a cynical smile that if he had not previously realised his six months' absence he might have done so when young Romaine's voice fell on his ear. The change in it, though subtle, was so marked—to the man who had not heard it in course of transition—that it seemed to place years rather than months between their last meeting and the present, and it amply prepared Loring for what he saw when he turned round.

All alteration in manner and appearance consists rather in the accentuation or modification of original characteristics than in the developement of fresh ones; consequently it is very seldom noticed by a casual observer when intercourse is unbroken. To Lord Garstin and to dozens of his other acquaintances Julian Romaine was still a "nice boy," just as his good-looking features were still the young features of a year ago. To Loring the difference in face was as perceptible as was the difference in the young man's whole personality, and the key-note of the difference lay in the absence of genuineness in both; in the deliberate assumption in the present of what had been natural and uncalculated in the past. Julian's face had grown thinner and harder, and the boyish smile which was in consequence no longer perfectly harmonious was a trifle over-accentuated; while the bright, ingenuous glance of his eyes had grown extraordinarily like his mother. His manner was the gay, young manner which had gained him so many friends, with just that touch of exaggeration added to it which artificiality gives.

His cordiality as he wrung Loring's hand was rather—like the demonstrative welcome in his voice—admirably adjusted to meet the requirements of the moment than an expression of the man himself. He was very carefully dressed, with a par-

ticularly dainty flower in his buttonhole, and he had an air of suppressed elation or excitement about him.

"Back again at last, old fellow!" he said buoyantly. "By Jove, what an age it is since you went! And have you had a good time? When did you reach home? Tell us all about it! You've no idea how glad I am to have him back, Lord Garstin!" he added, greeting the elder man with a boyish, half-laughing apology for his exuberance which was very effective. His manner to Lord Garstin was as charming as ever; rather more so, indeed, as its frank deference had acquired a polish derived from sundry little artistic touches such as only calculation and intention can bestow.

"You seem to have managed very well without me!" returned Loring, with good-humoured satire. "The world seems to have used you pretty fairly, I'm glad to see! I've only been back about forty-eight hours or I should have looked you up, of course. I hope Mrs. Romaine is here?"

"I hope she is better?" said Lord Garstin, with genuine concern. "We have all been desolated over her illness!"

Julian, who had nodded lightly to Loring, turned to Lord Garstin with a bright, affectionate laugh—also very like his mother's—and to Loring's quick and alert perception an added touch of artificiality became apparent in his manner as he said gaily:

"It has been desolating, hasn't it? It's very good of you to say so, though! Thanks, I'm delighted to say she is all right again. We had a terrific encounter as to whether she should or should not come to the affair, and she carried the day."

"Being perfectly restored to health she didn't see the force of allowing herself to be shut up and coddled by a silly boy."

The light, high-pitched voice, somewhat thin, as was the characteristic little laugh with which the words were spoken, came from directly behind Julian, and as Loring, who had seen her coming, stepped forward to meet her, Mrs. Romaine, with a passing shake of her son's arm, stretched out her hand with graceful cordiality.

"Welcome back, Mr. Loring," she said. "I thought your first visit would have been to this good-for-nothing boy, but I am very glad to meet you here all the same. Lord Garstin," she continued, as she turned to shake hands, "I believe you were enquiring after my health? I can't

allow good breath to be wasted in that way! I assure you it has been much ado about nothing, and I am perfectly, ridiculously well!"

She laughed as she finished, but a certain strained insistence had grown in her tone as she spoke as though her desire to impress the fact she stated was strong enough to undermine her control of her voice.

But Loring, looking at her, was too fully occupied in criticising her appearance to notice the tone of her voice. There must have been some society fraud at the bottom of her reported illness, he decided, and that was why she was so anxious to pass it over; for certainly he had never seen her look better. She was admirably dressed, and she was very slightly and skilfully "made up"; a condition new to him in her, and one of which Marston Loring emphatically approved in women past their first youth. He told himself, moreover, that either his impression of her had been fainter than the reality, or else she had actually gained in what he could only define to himself—and define roughly and inadequately as he was well aware—as "grip." There was the faintest flavour of nerve and concentration behind her admirable society manner, which gave it a wonderful piquancy in the eyes of her observer; a flavour which was evidently quite unconscious and involuntary, and had its origin in ingrain character. Loring admired power—of a certain class—in women.

In his interest in her expression, and his mental comments on it—determined, as they could not fail to be, by his own character—he was deceived by her cleverly arranged colouring into ignoring the almost painful thinness of her face; nor did he understand how hollow and sunken those glittering eyes would have been less cleverly and artificially treated.

She replied gaily to Lord Garstin's gallant reception of her assurance, and then turned again to Loring with an easy interested question on his voyage.

"You are not the only returned traveller to-day!" she said, as he answered her. "By-the-bye, Julian, I was on the way to send you into the other room. There is some one there you will like to see!"

She smiled significantly up at him, patting his arm as she spoke, and Julian answered with boyish eagerness.

"In the other room?" he said. "Well,

perhaps I ought just to say how do you do, you know, oughtn't I? Loring, old fellow, we shall meet again, of course? What are you going to do afterwards? We might go down to the club together? And he must come and dine with us, mustn't he, mother? Suppose you arrange it!" And with a comprehensive gesture and another, "I'll just say how do you do, I think!" he disappeared in the crowd.

Mrs. Romaine turned with a shrug of her shoulders and a pretty expressive grimace to the two men.

"Poor boy!" she laughed. "What a thing it is to be young! And what a tantalising spectacle a wedding must be under the circumstances! A pretty wedding, wasn't it?"

"An ugly wedding would be rather a refreshing change, don't you think?" suggested Loring. "One has seen a good many pretty ones, if you come to think of it!"

"You're not in the least changed by six months in Africa," returned Mrs. Romaine, shaking her head at him prettily. "Now, tell me, really, have you had a good time out there?"

The question was friendly and interested after a society fashion, but the interest was entirely on the surface, and the little talk that followed about Loring's experiences was joined in as a matter of course by Lord Garstin. It lasted until Mrs. Romaine said lightly:

"And now, I suppose, I ought to follow Julian's example and 'just say how do you do, don't you know!' I have only seen Mrs. Pomeroy in the distance as yet."

She nodded brightly and moved away, stopping constantly on her way through the rooms to exchange scraps of conversation until she came to where Mrs. Pomeroy, amiable, inert, and smiling as though she had been sitting there for the last three months, was holding a small court. She welcomed Mrs. Romaine as she had welcomed all comers.

"So glad to see you," she said placidly. "Such a long time! And how are you?"

"So immensely pleased to have you back again," said Mrs. Romaine enthusiastically; there was a strange little ring of genuineness in her voice which the fashionable exaggeration of her speech hardly warranted. "And you really only arrived yesterday? Miss Newton—Mrs. Compton, I mean—was in a dreadful state of mind the other day lest her bridesmaid should

fail her. And how is Maud? How sweet she looked! Quite the prettiest of the six. Where is she?"

"She was here just now," returned Maud's mother, as though that were quite a satisfactory answer to the question, and then as an afterthought she added vaguely: "I think she went to have an ice; your son took her."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Romaine, smiling. "Then there is one perfectly happy person in the house!"

Mrs. Pomeroy only smiled with vague blandness; evidently the relations between the Romaines and the Pomeroy's had developed extensively before the departure of the latter for Cannes; and as evidently they were quite undisturbing to Miss Pomeroy's mother.

"The bridesmaids' dresses were very nice, I think," she said, with amiable irrelevancy. "I was afraid they sounded trying. But it has been very pleasant altogether, hasn't it? I wish we were going to stay in town. We had a shocking crossing."

A keen attention had sprung into Mrs. Romaine's eyes, and for an instant it seemed as though all the society gaiety died from her face, leaving exposed the hard, almost fiercely determined, foundation on which it was imposed. Then the foundation disappeared again.

"To stay in town!" she echoed lightly. "Why, are you not going to stay in town, dear Mrs. Pomeroy?"

"Unfortunately not," was the answer. "My sister who lives in Devonshire—I think you have heard me speak of her?—is ill, and has begged me to go and see her. So we are going for a week or ten days, I am sorry to say."

"I am sorry to hear," said Mrs. Romaine, with pretty concern. "Just at the beginning of the season, too. It's rather hard on poor Maud, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is hard on poor Maud, isn't it?" was the undisturbed response.

There was a moment's pause, and then under her paint a burning colour crept up to the very roots of Mrs. Romaine's hair, and her eyes shone with a sudden eager excitement.

"My dear Mrs. Pomeroy," she began gaily, but speaking rather quickly, too, and in a higher pitch than was usual with her, "don't you remember, months ago, promising to lend me Maud for a little while? This is the very opportunity. Of course," she lowered her voice a little, "I wouldn't propose it if you did not know quite

as well as I do how the land lies. But, as I think we two old mothers are of one mind on that point, I shan't scruple. Let Maud come to me, if she will, while you are in Devonshire. Oh, of course it needn't mean anything—it's an old promise, you know, and she and I are great friends on our own account. Talk of the angels!" she went on gaily, nodding towards a slim, white figure coming towards them with Julian in its immediate wake.

Maud Pomeroy was looking as pretty and as proper as she had looked every day since she had emerged from the school-room, but there was a little flush on her face which was not habitual to her. She returned Mrs. Romaine's greeting with the grateful cordiality so pretty from a girl to an older woman, evinced as was her wont more by manner than by speech; and indeed Mrs. Romaine gave her little time for speech.

"Your mother has been telling me of this dreadful Devonshire business!" she said. "And I've had what I flatter myself is a happy thought! I want you to come to me, Maud, dear, while your mother is away. You know you promised ages ago to let yourself be lent to me for a little while, and this is the very opportunity, isn't it?"

It would not have been "the thing" under the circumstances that any one of the trio should glance at Julian; consequently no one noticed the curious flash of expression that passed across his face as his mother spoke. Maud Pomeroy hesitated and looked dutifully at her mother.

"It's very kind of Mrs. Romaine, Maud, dear, isn't it?" said Mrs. Pomeroy with non-committal amiability.

"It is sweet of her," responded Maud prettily.

"Well, then, do let us consider it settled. I shall enjoy it of all things. When do you go, dear Mrs. Pomeroy? To-morrow week? Oh, it would be too tantalising to whisk Maud away when she had just begun to enjoy herself; wouldn't it, Maud?"

Miss Pomeroy hesitated again, and the colour on her cheeks deepened by just a shade. She did not glance at her mother this time.

"Thank you very much," she said at last. "But shan't I be a nuisance to you?"

There was just the touch of charmingly conventional demur in her tone which made her submission seem, as all her actions

seemed, the result of a gentle, easily influenced temperament. Mrs. Romaine assured her gaily that she would indeed be a terrible nuisance, but that she herself would do her best to bear it, and then rose, her eyes very bright.

"I must run away now," she said, and her voice also was bright, almost excited. "I'm so delighted that we've settled it. Let me know when to expect you, then, dear. Good-bye, Mrs. Pomeroy; I'll take every care of your child and return her when you want her—only don't let it be too soon! I needn't take you away, sir," she continued, turning to Julian. He had been standing by ever since that flash had passed over his face with an expression of eager interest in the discussion. "I dare say you're not in any hurry. No, you need not even come downstairs with me. I see Mr. Loring. He'll take care of me, I'm sure."

Mr. Loring, who was within hearing, as the tone of the words implied—indeed, they were more than half addressed to him—came up promptly.

"For how long may I have that privilege?" he said.

She explained to him lightly as he shook hands with Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter, and then with another farewell and a pretty, affectionate "Au revoir!" to Julian, she turned away with him.

He put her into her carriage and she held out her hand with a little gesture of thanks and farewell.

"Thanks," she said; her tone and manner alike were very friendly and familiar in the exaggerated, artificial style which had certainly grown on her, and seemed to imply something beyond the superficial interest to which she had kept perforce in her society intercourse with him. "It is so pleasant to see you again! When will you come to see me quietly? Before you are hard at work, you know! To-morrow, now! To-morrow happens to be a free day with me. Come to tea. Good-bye!"

"COYOTE HUNTING."

A WESTERN SKETCH.

It was the end of October, and there was a lull in the agricultural work upon the ranch. The outside cattle had all been branded, the last load of alfalfa carried and stacked; the same had been done to the sunflowers; and the corn, Indian of course, was all standing in great heaps in the corn patch, cut, and stocked,

till it was time to make a rick of it in the feed corral. All our preparations for the winter, and we expected a very severe one, were finished, the very "ties" even fetched from the Denver and Rio Grande track, and made into a huge wood pile just outside the kitchen door. Such a pile it was, too, with a smaller one of pitch-pine from the mountains for kindling purposes—you rarely use paper to light your fire without West—beside it, and in my ignorance I thought we should never use it up by spring. The roof of our shanty had been inspected and resingled where required, to keep out the insidious snows; the stove pipes refitted on each other; we were ready outside for King Winter, come when he might, and he might come any day now. Inside the house, too, we had not been idle, but had been laying in vast stocks of provisions, for to be snowed up on a lonely prairie miles away from the nearest store is no joke.

Great barrels of pickled pork adorned the "dug-out" floor, ditto of flour and potatoes, whilst two smaller ones held eggs put down in lime; on the shelves of the store-room stood several dozen lard pails full of cherry butter, jam, and "sweet pickle," whilst we had heaps of canned fruit and vegetables, to say nothing of grocery stores. We had also made each bed a couple of new comforts constructed of "cotton batten," i.e. cotton wool, quilted, several thicknesses of it, between sheets of gaily coloured calico, a bed-covering not to be despised when it was twenty degrees below zero!

All these preparations being completed—and we had all of us worked very hard to get them done—we felt that we deserved a little pleasure, and a coyote having taken advantage of E.'s ducks being out for a walk without their mistress's fostering care, to make a meal off the whole brood, we determined to revenge the ducks and hunt the coyotes.

The coyote is about the size of a large sheep-dog; it is, in point of fact, a kind of cross between a sheep-dog and wolf; it has a beautiful grey coat, shading off into dull fawn, and a fine brush, both coat and brush being in the best condition in October and November.

It is a half-timid, half-bold creature, the prairie wolf; and when the cold grows very intense and the wolves "pack," as it is called, there are fearful tales told about them. Tenderfeet, counting the ties from one city to another in search of work,

have been known to go in holy terror of their lives, but I never heard of an instance in which they have attacked a human being. If a cow-brute falls on the snowy prairie during a cold snap and the coyotes find him, that cow-brute promptly "goes up"; they will sometimes kill the young calves, and are the horror of the proud possessors of poultry-yards, but I do not think they do much harm otherwise.

But whether they do harm or not, there is no doubt that their grey skins make delightful rugs, and if you like to spoil your skin by cutting off the ears and taking them to the agent, why, the United States Government will give you a dollar a pair for them.

Anyway, the boys on our creek wanted a day's play, and so on that fine October morning we all determined to go a-hunting. Let no thought cross any one's mind of well-groomed steeds, shiny-coated hounds, and a well-appointed field. These vanities were far from us; we were merely a motley and not particularly select crew, prepared to hunt the wily coyote across the bluffs and wash-outs of the great American prairie. We were mostly English, one or two Swedes, as the Germans are called out West, being amongst us, and with two or three exceptions the field was entirely composed of the noble sex, the American girls of the district looking upon hunting as something very "rapid" indeed.

The meet was to be just outside the little city, "Squire" Paley of that town providing the "pack," which consisted upon this occasion of three greyhounds. I was wild with delight at the idea of a day's hunting, riding being at that time a new and particular joy to me, and one I had never had the chance to indulge in in the old country.

I had a cow-pony all to myself, and how I rejoiced in the possession of that animal, having traded a gold bracelet for him with a girl off a neighbouring ranch, and I can remember to this day the first day's ride I ever had; indeed, it was the first time I had ridden in my life. I mounted Rorie at nine in the morning, and did not get off him till six that same evening. That was pretty well for a first experience, and I stuck on all the time, too.

I groomed Rorie myself—the boys had hardly ever any time to do it for me—and in order to make him look smart, in a rash moment had him hog-maned and his tail

cut, a very cruel proceeding in Colorado, where the flies are so troublesome; but I did it from the very best possible motive, and in all ignorance. Otherwise, I am glad to say, Rorie had a happy life of it, a warm stable during the winter, and the best of the feed at all times. He got so tame, too, that I had only to go into the buck pasture and whistle, and he would trot up to me at once in the most affectionate manner, and rub his old nose against my shoulder, although the boys might call him in vain again and again, and as soon as they got near to him he would kick up his heels and be off. This same October morning Rorie and I were going to have a long day together, and we were both delighted exceedingly.

The boys were to hunt also, Jack on a tall animal called Blaine, with a wonderful neck and tail action; one could tell him miles away upon the prairie. Charlie had a "plug," which rejoiced in the name of Cleveland. We wished to be quite impartial, and not to hurt any one's feelings in naming our stud, but for purposes of every-day life he went by the name of Clee, and I grieve to say had a way of acting "mean" when he was particularly wanted to show himself off. As for me, I was very proud that day, for by dint of long practice when none of the boys were round, I had succeeded in learning to mount from level ground as the Western girls did—a feat which sounds easy enough, but required a good deal of patience both from Rorie and myself.

I did it that morning with great success, and the two boys looked on applaudingly whilst I did so, and said, in the way that brothers do, that it reflected great credit upon—Rorie.

So we three rode off to Pine City. Rorie's coat was shining; he looked so nice, and I had a nearly new habit on, given me by a cousin at home, who was a rich girl, and could afford to have her habits made by one of the best makers.

Luckily, too, she was a tall, stout girl, and I was a thin one, so that with some "taking in" it fitted me fairly well, at least I thought so then, and I felt very proud of it, especially as every girl upon the Creek had begged for the pattern; the riding-habit "up to date" in those parts consisting of a long flowing skirt worn with a jacket of quite a different colour, and either a straw hat with a waving plume or a cowboy felt. We all of us rode away merrily to the city; it was not often we

all three got a day's holiday together. It was the most lovely of all seasons, the American Fall. Already on the slopes of the hills the scrub-oak was blazing in orange and crimson patches; at our feet were great clumps of autumnal-tinted poison ivy, so called because should you pick it carelessly it poisons your hands; whilst by the bed of the creek the maples and cottonwood trees made a long, many-tinted band of foliage stretching far away to the Platte River, and great bunches of crimson and black fruit weighed down the cherry-trees, whilst the plums were turning a greeny gold under the autumn sun. When we reached the city we found the field awaiting us with much impatience. The "Squire," a gigantic Swede—and, indeed, all the German settlers round were tall, fine; well-set-up men—had his three greyhounds held tightly in a leash. E., a mite of an English-woman, with the spirit of a small lion, and a wonderful capacity for work and fun, had brought an American girl along with her, both their habits nearly sweeping the ground; but, indeed, once one saw them ride, their get-up was of no account, for they were perfectly at home in their saddles.

The Boss, the Colonel, the Judge—all the Creek boys rejoiced in nicknames of one sort or the other—were all there, and each ranchman's household upon the Creek, English or Swede, were represented by one of the outfit. Indeed, so much did Judge enter into the spirit of the day, that he had raked up, from somewhere or the other, a small brass trumpet which he blew continually as a substitute for a horn, and thus constituted himself huntsman. The boys all went to the saloon and had refreshment, chiefly consisting of lager beer at twenty-five cents the bottle. Owing, however, to the rarity of the air, and the height at which we all lived, this very light beer would have the strangest effect upon the tenderfoot when he first came out, for a couple of small glasses—and the twenty-five cent. bottle held no more—would fly to his head and make him quite silly. The poor boys could not understand this at all, but after a time or two the effect would wear off, and they could drink their lager without the slightest inconvenience.

Beer, however, was a luxury we rarely treated ourselves to on the ranch, as quite a small cask cost about four dollars and a half, and ran out in less than no time. So, as it may be supposed, the boys enjoyed a bottle of lager whenever they got the

chance; and whilst they were all indulging at the saloon, we women went to the drug store and had lemon-squashes and milk-shakes. If it had only been "the thing" I think we should have enjoyed some lager also; but no woman is ever seen in a saloon out West, and so we had to put up with other light refreshment elsewhere. I may mention, en passant, that the drug store was the only place where, if you were ill, you could get decent brandy and whisky, but the price was too prohibitive for every-day life—the only whisky you got at the saloon being Bourbon, which the boys did not care for at all.

Then, the inner man, and woman, having been attended to, Squire drew out his big Waterbury, for unlike most ranchmen he wore a watch, and proclaimed suddenly that "time was up." Judge blew an answering blast upon his trumpet, and we all moved off to slow music, the few inhabitants of the small city coming to their doors and laughingly watching the "mad English," as they called us, out of sight.

But we did not mind, it was all meant and said good-humouredly by people who were very kind and considerate neighbours to us. Only we differed a little in our ideas of enjoyment.

For a time, after leaving the city behind us, we were a little bothered with getting over the barbed wire fencing, as so much of the land near the town was taken up. But this only gave an added zest to the day's proceeding, for were not sportsmen in the old country troubled with the same thing at times, and besides, had not the Colonel, with a foresight highly to be commended, provided himself with a large pair of nippers, with which he ruthlessly lay level sufficient wire to take us through?

So we rode away across the bluff, with Prairie-dog Town, a couple of acres undermined by that strange little animal, to our right. Some of the inhabitants of it came out, and sat in the doors of their houses and looked at us—funny little tan-coloured animals these, which sat up on their hind legs, à la kangaroo, and folding their front paws meekly in front of them, would give sharp, shrill little yelps, much like a toy rabbit does when you pinch it. Next we rode through quite a forest of scrub-oak, growing to the height of two or three feet, and this caught E.'s and her friend's habits fearfully. The men, too, got their boots

scratched into the bargain; but these were heavy Wellingtons — all shorter kinds being called shoes in Western life. Besides this, they all wore "schaps" — a species of leather breeches without a seat — above their dark-blue "overalls," which protected their legs finely. Now, too, we rode in silence, the horn-blower even being quiet, for we had reached the School Section, where we were sure of finding a coyote or two; and sure enough as we headed a bluff, we saw down in the hollow the carcass of a dead cow. Only the hide and bones seemed left; it had "gone up" long ago, during a cold snap, but in spite of that, the hide was heaving and moving as if there was still life within. And so there was, for the Colonel gave a shout, and out tumbled two beautiful coyotes, with skins and brushes in fine condition, who had been worrying the dry bones of the poor cow-brute.

We all shouted loudly, and then rode quickly on. I became almost breathless at first at Rorie's sudden spring forwards, but after five minutes of dogged sticking on settled down to the pace. A fine dance those coyotes led us, twisting sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left! As for me, I expected to come to grief every moment over the many patches of cacti plants, with their pear-shaped fruit covered with minute prickles; however, Rorie took great care of me, and showed much skill in avoiding them. Every now and again, as we neared the Creek we would come across "taken up" pre-emptions, and the Colonel's ever-useful pliers be brought into action. It was a glorious day, the sky, as usual, intensely blue, and so high overhead that it looked almost black. In the background the bluffs at the bottom of the Foot-hills were flaming with scrub-oak in yellow and red, the poison ivy lay round the Creek in more vivid shades of the same colours, whilst far above everything the snowy peaks were blushing and gleaming pink and gold, as the sun caught them here and there. Around the Creek the wild cherry-trees which gave it its name were covered with bunches of red and black fruit, almost hiding the foliage, whilst the greengage-looking plum covered its trees, and the plaintive note of the killdeer kept repeating "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" over and over again in the cotton-wood boughs. There was no difficulty in fording the Creek this time of the year, it was simply a trickling stream in its sandy bed; and with an

encouraging "hoo" to the horses we were down its banks and over it after three grey specks, for another coyote had turned up, growing smaller by degrees and beautifully less in the distance.

The boys began to be afraid the game would escape them, and vowed next time they would catch them in traps. I cannot say either that the greyhounds were going as keenly after the coyotes as might be wished by the ardent sportsmen; in fact, they appeared to fight a little shy of these creatures, in spite of all the Squire would tell us of the wonderful exhibitions they had given of their fleetness on former days. The more, too, the dogs lagged, the more did the Squire pile on these tales, till one of the boys was heard to mutter that they did not "seem up to sample, somehow."

Then the Squire became a victim to the prevailing crossness which was, I grieve to say, affecting the field, and, turning on Judge, declared that it was his wretched horn which had done all the mischief; in fact, the adjective he used was not wretched, but that does as a very fair substitute. One could not but feel too that there might be something in this idea, for really Judge's horn was a most discordant instrument, with but one note, and oh! how thankful we felt that it had but one! However, harmony was restored at last by Colonel's getting near enough to one of the coyotes to shoot it, to the joy of us all, especially of E., who remembered the only time she had allowed her ducks to go on the Creek without being personally conducted, and found nothing left of her treasured brood save a few white feathers floating upon the top of the water. Well, we felt that, at any rate, now we had "killed" at last, and next the one thought of the whole crowd was E's Ranch and food. For we all suddenly discovered we were very hungry, and the mention by E. of a certain round of spiced beef cooling in her dairy did not make us feel much better; indeed, we felt we must ride for that beef for all we were worth.

As for the other coyotes, they might return unmolested to the bosoms of their families, why should we harm the poor things? With this humane resolve we rode off in the direction of E.'s Ranch. We were rather to bits, too, some of us, by this time, owing to the scrub-oak. E.'s habit and her friend's were in tatters round the bottom, and an unlucky "tender-foot" who had no schaps and Wellingtons

had torn his socks to ribbons round the ankles; but as these last useful articles could be bought at the dry goods store very reasonably, namely, seven pair for a dollar, he did not seem to mind much.

How good that beef was, too, by the time we got round to it! During the evening two boys off a neighbouring creek rode over, bringing in a waggon a couple of coyotes they had trapped, and suggested that we should have another day's hunting on the morrow. We were none of us loth. My two boys left me for the night with E. and rode off home to see to their animals, promising to be over to breakfast next day. E. and I tidied up her habit and went to bed a little tired; indeed, I was so tired that it seemed to me that I had only had an hour's sleep when I was called. Yet early as it was, I heard E. hard at work sweeping out the parlour. It was in reality five o'clock, and I could hear through the open window the "lowing" of the cows being driven in for milking, and the splash and clinking of the buckets in the well as they filled the tubs. One tub ready filled over-night was waiting for me now, so I heroically splashed in, and was soon dressed and ready to help with breakfast.

Preparing a Western breakfast is no joke. The porridge, certainly, had been cooked overnight, as it required two hours to "cree," being boiled with milk, and only needed to be warmed up. But there was hot biscuit to be baked, a dish of sweetbreads and ham to be fried, eggs to be boiled, and potatoes—no breakfast out West is complete without potatoes in some form or the other—to be cooked, stewed fruit to be put out, and cream and butter to be fetched from the dairy, for—oh, sinful extravagance!—we ate our porridge with cream.

By the time E. had done the rooms, and I had laid and cooked breakfast, the boys began to drop in. It was then half-past seven, and we sat down to our meal with the appetites of people who had been up and working for a couple of hours. Breakfast being over, we determined to ride to the Hunt Ranch and let our captured coyotes loose at the bottom of it, hoping they would give us a run over the School Section again. E. and I quickly cleared away and washed up, the boys getting the horses ready, then we raked out and relaid the fire, pulled down all the blinds in the shanty—the Western equivalent to "Not at home"—and locked the

door, putting the key under a stone, so that whoever got home first might have the joy of lighting the stove.

We were soon on our horses and off towards the School Section, but that day we dispensed with Judge's horn; it had been of no use the day before, indeed, rather in the way. There were about ten of us all told, a motley-looking outfit, on all sorts and conditions of horse-flesh, accompanied by two snarling coyotes in a buggy. Still even without the wonderful horn we looked strange enough; in fact, we must have done so, for when we crossed the D. and R. G. track a passing passenger train slowed down to look at us, all the people craning their heads out of the window, whilst the conductor, engineer, fireman, and brakemen took a most lively interest in our proceedings, and I heard a most unmistakeable English voice suggesting that we were a lynching party, though in what capacity E. and myself would have been present, history does not say. Needless to say it was a lovely morning again; the Fall is usually a succession of beautiful weather, and the cool crispness of the breeze as it swept on our faces from over the mountains made life worth living indeed. Perfect weather and a good horse to ride, all my desires for the time being were bounded with these two things, and the primitive man, which, despite nineteen centuries of civilisation, underlies more or less of human nature, rejoiced greatly.

Then the coyotes were let loose; they looked fierce and snarly—the boys had fed them well with calf meat before we started—but when they were first let out of the traps they lay quite still for a few moments, their limbs being cramped, and then got on their legs and started off in a long, slow stride, increasing in speed each minute.

We gave them good law, and then with a wild "hoo" were after them. Oh, the joy of that long, steady 'lope across the prairie, up and down bluffs, which rolled away in all directions like the petrified billows of some enormous ocean; now swaying to one side to avoid a clump of cacti, and now to the other out of the way of a prairie-dog hole; but still on, and on, and on, the coyotes leading us swiftly! At last, to our distress, they turned abruptly and headed for the Hunt Ranch. We all looked at each other, for although at the top of this ranch there was a vast table-land many thousand acres in extent, the side was very steep, covered with huge

boulders, dead trees, scrub-oak, and rolling gravel. Wise and sagacious coyotes, they felt themselves upon their own ground here, and knew that the human animals following could get on but slowly compared to themselves. Still, we had not come all that distance to be thus outwitted by a couple of vagabonds in grey, so we set our teeth—at least, I know I did—and prepared to follow them. Up the dry cañon the gallant little cow-ponies panted, and Jack shouted out to us to knot up our bridles and let them have their heads, which we did; I, I own, with much misgiving, for it was only the second time I had been up a mountain cañon—indeed, at that time my riding itself was of very recent date. The ponies, however, took us in charge and plunged on; I held to my saddle-horn tightly, and felt like a fly upon the walls of a room, only the fly, happy creature, has wings.

How glad I was when we reached the top and another rolling plain stretched in front of us, and beyond that such a view all round; bounded on three sides by the wonderful Rockies, the great white peaks of the Snowy Range, behind them! Before us lay Denver, the queen city of the plains, but a few years ago a collection of wooden shanties, and now a great city with many thousand inhabitants. In front of the city the River Platte wound slowly in and out, only a shining streak of water at this season, although the deep, wide sandy banks showed what it might be when in flood. To our left Dawson Mountain and the Devil's Head stood up jagged and rough, and behind them again lay the Foot-hills. Pike's Peak, with its great shoulders jutting out, dominated over all the Range on one side, whilst Long's Peak did the same on the other, and the fantastic red rocks of Perry Park were dwarfed into nothingness; whilst gleaming here and there the iron ways of the D. and R. G. and Santa Fé track glittered in the sun. E. and I had been busy watching all this, and when we looked round the others were already a vanishing point in the distance; we should never catch them up now. So we got off the ponies, undid their saddles and let them crop the grass. By this time, too, we were both conscious of a dreadful thirst, and would have given anything for a drink of water. It was little wonder, for it was long past three. How we hunted for water, and the more we looked the thirstier we grew; it seemed as if there was none to be found. At last E.

gave a cry of joy; she had hit upon a spring. We did not stand upon ceremony, but flung ourselves upon the ground face downwards, and took one long, delicious draught; how delightfully cool it was after our long, hot ride!

Then we jumped up with a cry of horror; it was strongly impregnated with sulphur! I draw a veil over our subsequent sufferings; suffice it to say that after a painful interval we were as thirsty as ever, and had we not found a few wild gooseberries I do not know what we should have done.

By this time we saw the boys returning; they had evidently been successful, for a couple of coyote skins adorned their saddle-horns, which were promptly presented to us with many regrets that we had not been "in at the death." For my part I felt just as pleased that I had not, for in spite of all my time of Western life, except rattle-snakes, I never got used to killing anything, even a chicken, although it was often my hard fate to be compelled to do so.

But when in graphic language E. told the adventure of the sulphur spring, I thought the boys would have died with laughter. I was dreadfully thirsty, and thought them not a little unkind, but they made up for it on the way home, by riding ahead and getting us some water from the Creek, and I am bound to say I never tasted such nectar in my life; and even now whenever I look at my coyote skin I feel thirsty directly.

DONEGAL SKETCHES.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE next day was Sunday, and I was off early from comfortable Carrick. The cliff walk to Ardara was my programme—rather a formidable one, as even Mr. Baddeley in his Guide Book thinks it. With just a cartridge-case for a night kit, my fishing-rod, and a walking-stick, I mounted the car which was to take me to Glen, some six miles on the road. Hereafter I was to find my way by instinct, compass, or the cliff edges, if these were practicable.

The weather was still good—a mercy under the circumstances—breezy and clear. My car therefore put me down with plenty of hopes by the police barracks in Glen, and I struck at once for the Sawpit, a cliff crevice in the first bay north of Glen. The church bells were ringing, and the village

damsels in fine bonnets and bare feet were wending their way to mass. They put on their boots by-and-by. It was pretty to see them and their menkind kneeling at the crosses which are a feature of Glen. Saint Columb is the great saint of this place, and there is plenty of vague legendary local lore about him.

From the very first the rocks were most imposing. Glen Head itself is a precipice exactly the height of Carrigan Head, which it resembles also in having a signal tower. After that comes the Sturrall, a headland approached by an edge much worse than Helvellyn's boasted Striding Edge. From the Sturrall there is a drop almost to the sea level by the Sawpit, with the sea lashing the rocks at one's side, and some rather nervous going. Here in the glen are two or three cottages and a few acres of green patches, with a rivulet and mountain lakes inland with plenty of fish in them. But I had no time for fishing just then. I wished to break the back of the day's adventure ere I tried my luck in that way. So onwards and up a steep climb to the summit of Tormore Head, whence the needles of rock in the Atlantic are exceedingly weird, and none more so than the Tormore Island with its Doge's cap finial. The wind here on the summit of this eight-hundred-feet precipice was very strong; but the sights also were strong to counteract its inconveniences. Hence Lake Anaffrin inland, buried among granite mountains, could be seen. The trout here are said to be good and numerous. But though I hesitated awhile, I resisted Anaffrin, and again descended to the sea level by the yellow sands of Paliska Bay, with its picturesque boundary of red and white cliffs. For the fourth time I had to tackle an ascent immediately after a descent, all of which were as abrupt in the one direction as the other. Nor did I halt anywhere until I had turned the corner of Donegal's southern mass and looked across the water at Loughros Point, Dawros Head, and the lighthouse of Arran beyond. Then I allowed myself to lunch, and truly I could hardly anywhere in the land have feasted amid more impressive surroundings.

I fancied the worst was over. It was an error, but I do not mind it now since it tempted me to give an hour to Lake Adoochro, about half a mile from the coast under the rocks of Slieve Tooley. The ripple on the water was very inviting, and so it seemed were the rather dull-coloured flies

of local make which I threw on the lake. I fished for an hour, had perhaps a hundred rises, and caught half-a-dozen pretty little trout, the biggest being about half a pound. But they all returned to their own element not much the worse, I hope, for their adventure. I could in no manner consent to add to my burdens. Lake Adoochro must be about as full of brown trout as it well can be—though near the heathery shores they do not seem to run to any size.

Four o'clock found me on the seaward spurs of Slieve Tooley, on the look-out for the pair of golden eagles I had been told of. Sure enough there they were, soaring high over the mountain top, with that serene gait of theirs which no other created bird can match. The contrast between them and the screeching sea-birds on my left was much in favour of the eagles. I had got rather tired of the aggressive shrieks of the gulls, even as I had almost wearied of the succession of majestic cliffs and precipices of this unrivalled coastline. So I came within half a mile of Maghera, where the mountain falls almost like a wall into the sea, and farther east into the sands of Loughros Beg Bay.

Here I should have felt in a fix but for the company of a man who had been out to see if his sheep had tripped over a precipice. The only visible route into Maghera was by a sheep-track scratched in the well-nigh vertical cliffs, some two hundred feet above the sea. To my companion, with bare feet, it was not so bad; but it was different for me and my boots. The cliff was of slippery shale. It was really ticklish—worse far than the One Man Pass. Still, there was nothing for it. The man repeatedly turned to ask if I was afraid. One does not like to confess to fear at any time; truth to tell, however, it was rough on the nerves. Twice or thrice my slips were bad, nor was the rock very good stuff to hold on to. It broke in the hands. I was unfeignedly glad when the worst was past, and we descended into the sandy hollow, where a score or so of oblong wigwams set between the mountains and the Bay made up the miserable little village of Maghera.

From Maghera, one of "Balfour's roads"—as the relief works of the kind are called—runs into Ardara, about seven miles further. It was six o'clock, and I was tired. But sleeping in Maghera was not to be thought of, though my friend was civil enough to offer me the chance. I drank

some milk and ate—at his wife's urgent pressure—some stirabout from the family cooking-pot, suitably acknowledged their kindness, and then, having been carried pick-a-back over a stream which blocked the way to the high-road, I again got into routine walking order. It was half-past eight ere I reached Ardara, after a lovely walk between mountainslopes and the sandy Bay. I was dead tired, but uncommonly glad to have made the excursion. The note of "an Eton boy," who made just this trip a year or two ago, and recorded his ideas of it in the Ardara Hotel visitors' book, is not a whit too strong about the arduousness of the jaunt. Its distance, in mere mileage, cannot be short of twenty miles—but such miles!

The next day opened with showers. But the gracious north-easter got up again and there was soon enough blue sky for encouragement. I set out therefore for Dungloe. There are two or three routes to Dungloe from Ardara. I chose the most direct one, which leads across the Dawros Head country towards Maas, having first obtained the necessary leave to fish such of the Owenea lakes on my way as might tempt me. Truth to tell it was a lovely fishing day. The showers were just the thing. But my feet were a little sore from the trials of the previous day, and with the darkening clouds over the Gweedore mountains away north, I was somewhat anxious not to risk a downright soaking by unnecessary dallying. Lough Machugh is the lake hereabouts with the best reputation. A Catholic priest with a long nose whom I consulted on the high-road about the waters confirmed previous advisers in the matters. I was content, however, with a certain smaller lake, tributary to Machugh. Hardly had I cast ere I was in a decent fish. Away ran the line, and for five minutes things looked bright. Then, just when a gust of wind on my hat made me lose self-possession, up leaped the trout, and a moment later he was off with the barb firm in his gills. As pretty a little fish as an unskilful angler ever sighed in vain for! During the half-hour that followed there was sport with the youngsters. Here, as elsewhere in Donegal, the trout seemed taken more with sober flies than with manufactures of a garish hue.

The showers now came with briefer intervals. I put up my rod, therefore, and stepped out. There is not much to see between Ardara and Maas—chiefly uncultivated heath, plentifully and charmingly

broken with lilled lakelets. But as Maas is approached, the great Bay of Gweebarra with its miles of sand comes into view. The Gweebarra river had to be crossed by a ferry. The boat was old and worn, and I had the satisfaction of paying for the passage of two other passengers as well as myself. The ferryman "from the likes of me," he was civil enough to say, would not be satisfied with less than about twelve times his customary fare. Thence I journeyed to Lettermacaward, a tiny village, with lakes all about it, in one of which, I was informed by a talkative pig-driver, there were trout as large as lambs, but so lazy that they could not be induced to take flies of any kind. I gave them the chance, but my want of success seemed to confirm the tale of the lethargy, if not of the size, of the fish. Luncheon of bread and butter and milk at the post office here, with a cigar to boot, put me in train for the last ten miles of the day, by way of Ballynacarrick, where the high-road from the south comes to an end at another ferry.

The eight miles from Ballynacarrick to Dungloe were made under gloomy conditions of weather over the most woeful land that ever a farmer set eyes on. Black bog interspersed with big white rocks would be enough to disgust any peasantry but an Irish peasantry. Yet here their hovels were to be seen set among the rocks, and with wretched-looking crops also bedded between the boulders. The people themselves were to the eye as unprepossessing as their environment. For that, however, they cannot be blamed. The dreariness of their surroundings—bare moor to the east, and the great sandy waste of Trawenagh Bay to the west—was almost haunting even to me during the couple of hours I spent in them.

One pretty lake, about a mile from Ballynacarrick, made me put on the reel and try a few casts. Its islets were very attractive, and so was the rather forcible ripple which the north-east wind raised on it. But though I tarried here, throwing for half an hour, I had not a single rise. It was the only Donegal lake on which I failed in this respect. As a rule these waters must be quite crowded and the trout glad of the merest pretext to stretch themselves outside their populous domain.

This road to Dungloe goes with nightmare straightness across the moor, climbing its hills without deviation. Lough Aleck More was passed to the left—a great, shallow, islet-studded reach of water—and

soon afterwards, to my relief, the Catholic church of Dungloe appeared, and I was received at the "Post Office Hotel" of Maurice Boyle. I wish every hotel in Donegal were as good as this admirable, unpretending house.

A very bad squall of wind and rain ushered in the next day, and Arran was only dimly seen through the haze until twelve o'clock. I was ready to be detained by stress of weather. But, lo! soon after noon the sky broke, and though the wind blew a gale, it was decent walking weather. It seemed to me that I might at least get as far as Gweedore, some twelve miles distant only. This was my shortest day afoot, and also the roughest. It was downright fighting with the wind for an hour or two, and many were the moans and maledictions it raised in the various peasantry with whom I talked. Nothing, they said, could be worse for their beloved "taties." At Annagary Bridge it was simply fearful—quite a storm; and my memories of the agricultural wretchedness of this part of Donegal are much affected by recollection of the breathlessness to which at times I was reduced in fighting against the gusts.

Of Gweedore there is no need to say anything. Is it not famous wherever anglers do congregate—not to speak of politicians interested in Home Rule? The hotel was full—so full that I had to submit to a make-shift bedroom, no great hardship, in truth. It was told at dinner how one man only the week before had with his own rod brought three-and-twenty salmon to the leath in a single fishing day in the Glady. Scepticism was quelled by the respectability of the vouchers for this great achievement—with their own liveried servants waiting upon them while they bore witness to it. Also there was toasting in champagne of a youthful salmon fisher who had killed his first fish on that day. Gweedore is not a particularly winsome place for the mere tourist. When he has climbed Errigal and looked at Father McFadden's famous parish of Derrybeg he has nearly exhausted the "features" of the district. But for the accomplished angler it is hard to beat; and its remoteness is just the characteristic that pleases him most. Hence it is one of those hotels in which you can by no means rely on accommodation during the season.

Royal weather again the next day. I had some premonition of it in the sunset of the evening before, and so breakfasted early and was at Derrybeg, four miles off, ere nine o'clock. The western islands of

Donegal were fair to see as I gradually descended towards them. But the surf still ran high against their rocks, and one was disposed to pity the poor fellows whose ineptitude condemned them to live on such bleak, exposed spots of earth. Father McFadden, I regret to say, I did not see. I was, however, satisfied with what I saw of his flock. I declare it made one think of living on a chessboard to look at the smallness of the holdings of this over-populated district. I suppose in every family there are about three times as many children as there ought to be—from an economic standpoint—and yet it is England's fault that they are not all millionaires, or something of the kind!

From Derrybeg, with its manor-like parsonage, good-looking church, conspicuous police barracks, and degraded peasantry, I made as straight as possible for the Bloody Foreland mountain. But it was not so very straight: humanity and its tenements stopped the way. I expected ere coming here to find this north-western corner of the land about as wild and uninhabited as the Cape Wrath district of Scotland. What a delusion! For several miles north and south, a maze of disgusting little rough roads are scratched in the stony land, and the pedestrian has to wander like a man in a dream to and fro between miserable huts, aiming as best the roads will let him for the round summit of the mountain goal behind. It would never do to try and go in a bee-line. There would be lean, starveling patches of oats and the tenants themselves in the way—the latter crouched on their stone walls watching their consumptive cows and sheep pick up an ear of grass every half minute or so, and much indisposed to give a Saxon leave to trespass.

The man who has walked from Gweedore to Bloody Foreland will not be likely to forget the walk. Even the mountain itself—about one thousand feet high—is abominably encroached on. Not satisfied with trying to make oats grow on one of the most exposed spots anywhere in the kingdom, the people have crimped the slopes of the hill in their quest for turf—one of the subjects about which so much disputation has arisen between landlord and so-called tenants during the past ten years. The Irish of the Bloody Foreland are much to be pitied. But any one who has read the pamphlet of their parish priest, Father McFadden, called "Facts from Gweedore," will see that the Derrybeg landlords also deserve compassion.

talked with a few of the local peasantry. Their apathy was quite remarkable. But they all seemed to have relatives in America, upon whose comparative opulence they relied for a living. It was told me by one candid gentleman with a very red proboscis, and a cow, whom he held by a string, that the chief trouble of the country was not England, but the whisky. That seems to be the impression also of more than a few genuine patriots among the Irish clergy. But they whisper it in secret.

The day held beautifully fine. I considered myself a singularly favoured individual. Here I had been walking for a week and more in the part of Ireland most celebrated for its wet, and I had not had a single soaking. And I could stretch myself on the sward of the Foreland's level summit and enjoy one of the most comprehensive and interesting views you may behold anywhere in Ireland. Near at hand I looked upon a tract of country from which many a contumacious tenant has been evicted for his own good, while beyond were the mountains of Donegal, piled one above the other, with Errigal's veined pyramid conspicuous for its grace, and flat-backed Muckish notable for its bulk. The Atlantic Islands also were famously displayed. Tory seemed quite close, its fine eastern cliffs rather lost from this standpoint. The three Inishes—Inishbeg, Inishdooy, and Inishbofin—were like parts of the mainland, also to the north, and south towards Arran the other islets were just parted from Donegal by narrow waterways fringed with bright sand.

I had made a grievous mistake this day. I had started from the hotel forgetful of the luncheon packet. Thus I could not break my fast on the Foreland Hill, though I drank its health in whisky. But I determined to make for the nearest inn with all speed. This I calculated was seven miles distant—somewhat as the crow flies, across heather and bog to the high-road, which could be seen amid the dreary moorland north of the ridge of Tievealechid. I covered that seven miles in about an hour and a half, and congratulated myself. The big Lake Lougha, under Tievealechid, looked mightily alluring, but I was indisposed to move out of my way for it. Besides, conscience declined to allow me to poach it.

It was a roasting, brisk walk, through a largely-evicted district. The tenants re-

maining were of the most abject quality. The only building of any distinction passed was a snug little crimson barrack for two or three constables, with galvanised roof, and neat wire railings to the domain. But it was a significant sight. One of the men volunteered his opinion that it was a "pretty infernal part of the world" to be banished to. I fancy he would feel much more at home in South Africa, with twelve miles betwixt himself and his nearest neighbour.

The sands of Ballyness Bay looked tempting for a short cut to Falcarragh. But I was not sure of the tide. I kept therefore to the road when once I hit it, and so at three o'clock got fed on bread and butter and milk once again. This was at the post office inn of Gortahork. The postmaster, discreet man, frowned at the word Home Rule. He wanted to know what the taxes would amount to when Dublin had power to levy, according to its pleasure. Though Catholic and patriot, he felt proper respect for England, and told me of a man who for thirteen years had paid no rent and was yet extremely pressing to have his rent lowered by the Commissionera. It was clear as spring water that he thought his compatriots had hocused and baited England quite enough.

From Gortahork to Falcarragh it is but a couple of miles. The police barracks were mentioned as the finest building in Falcarragh. This sort of thing is quite odd to us Englishmen—it reveals such an eccentric condition of existence. I was not attracted by the police barracks, or even by the muscular constables themselves, lounging in their shirt-sleeves within their barrack yard. The village situation itself is, however, delightful, looking at Tory Island in one quarter and the noble cliffs of Horn Head in another. There are two modest inns here, in both of which I could see feminine faces more than passably fair. These, however, I resisted. I felt energetic. An additional seven and a half miles to the twenty I had already walked since leaving Gweedore seemed nothing at all, and the day was still in its prime. On, therefore, I went for Dunfanaghy, and here I arrived at about half-past seven, by no means jaded. I fancied Falcarragh would be the limit east of Irish cottage destitution. But it was not so. Some of the people towards Dunfanaghy seemed mere savages, alike in appearances, manners, and their debased surroundings. Derrybeg

way the crimson skirts and headgear which many of the women wear give a pleasant touch of brightness to the prevailing poverty. Between Falcarragh and Dunfanaghy this was wanting. But the population is not dense hereabouts—a mercy for all concerned.

Rather a loose sort of place this Dunfanaghy Hotel, with good victualling, however, to set against the almost Spanish indifference to those small details which go so far to explain the agreeable word "comfort." Mrs. Craik bewails Horn Head's inaccessibility to ladies because of Dunfanaghy's lack of hotel accommodation. That is going a little too far. The lack does not exist. With a little thought the "Stewart Arms" might be made as snug a nest for the bird of passage as any other house in the shire.

Down came the rain the next morning, and the coasts of Sheep Haven were obliterated. The outlook was absolutely dismal. But I relied on past experience of Donegal weather, and hoped for the afternoon. Nor was I disappointed. The mist lifted, the blue sky appeared, and when I had lunched I set off for Horn Head. On this interesting peninsula I tarried five or six hours. Its cliffs and precipices are worthy of a country which can boast of Carrigan Head, Glen Head, and Slieve League. The Horn itself is quite a dreadful pile, not inaptly named. Indeed, the rocks of which it consists are so far gone in dissolution in many places that you have a very reasonable fear as you perch on them that Horn Head is the very last part of Donegal you will set eyes on. Though you look down ever so carefully you can't help dislodging masses of shale, which excite the gulls below very considerably. These birds may be seen in multitudinous rows on the ledges, like so many schoolgirls, and they evidently object to avalanches without rhyme or reason.

All the north and west coast of the Horn Head peninsula deserves to be viewed. It is extensive enough to be fatiguing. I never saw so many rabbits in my life as on this headland. If they are not here by the million they are certainly to be reckoned by ens of thousands. The headland must a most, in fact, be undermined by them; and for its very preservation the proprietor of Horn Head House may be invited to give the public free shooting over his domain for a year, or two.

And now my walk through Donegal may be said to be at an end. True, there was one day more. The distance from Dunfanaghy to Letterkenny is about twenty-one miles, and I covered it by three o'clock the following afternoon. But this is rather a hackneyed road—for Donegal. You meet the mail-car on it, and not a few "jaunters" of other kinds. For there is a railway of narrow gauge at Letterkenny, and hence it is the starting-point for all passenger and mail traffic into the wilds.

The road to Letterkenny is not uninteresting, but save for Muckish, it is not appreciably beautified by mountain shapes. Creeslough, on Sheep Haven—seven miles on the way—is a pretty spot, with likely lakes near it, and a hotel in which I saw fishing-rods, betokening tourists, while I bought a handful of bad cigars. Donegal is a shocking county for tobacco. The visitor must look after himself in this respect. In Dunfanaghy, the capital of the north, the landlord of the hotel failed to obtain a cigar for me, by hook or by crook. Upon the whole, it is as well that he did fail. From Creeslough to Kilmacrenan you traverse a species of mountain pass. It is a small thing of the kind, with police barracks half-way. There is a dirty hole of an inn at Kilmacrenan, in which I was pestered by a very fat lady—a boarder, I understood—who much annoyed me with her company. She lolled out of the window and cracked indecorous jokes with the townsfolk what time she did not sit, facing me, twirling her thumbs, and telling of the pleasures of railway travel. For the first time in her life the other day she had gone five miles on the Letterkenny narrow gauge. I really wonder the rolling stock bore her, poor, crazy, fat soul!

But enough. With Letterkenny, its huge poorhouse, and lunatic asylum—to which the above-mentioned lady ought to have been sent—its choice of hotels, and its railway station, my tour finished. It is a trip upon which I look back with unmitigated pleasure. Donegal is not overrun with visitors at any time. When an election is afoot, I judge, you can hardly discover one to the hundred mile. It is cheap, and it is beautiful after the sterner methods of natural beauty. I was afraid Irish would be spoken in the wilds. There was hardly any of it anywhere, and only twice did an interlocutor show ignorance of English. The people are not genial and

sentimental, like the Irish folk of romance. I fancy they want more understanding than most Celts. They must have more virtues than they show on the surface. But that is a matter about which the average tourist or angler will not concern himself. The latter in particular will not be tempted out of his own line of diversion into the thorny maze of racial studies and politics. He, if any man, cannot fail to enjoy Donegal. In some respects it is a better county than Sutherlandshire. The Donegal hotels are not all first-class, but even the second and third raters are more comfortable than the smoky and sometimes insect-haunted hovels in the midst of forlorn, remote straths, which it is considered the thing in North Scotland to inhabit for five or six curious weeks in pursuit of "fush" during the dog days.

THE DINNER-HOUR.

ONE o'clock sounds from the City churches, passed on from one tower to another, over the heads of the hurrying crowd; but as the stroke of "one" is a business soon disposed of, the sounds might escape notice if it were not for a general change in the aspect of the City crowds. The intentness of business or pleasure seems to give way to an equal intentness of hunger. The streets were full before, but they are fuller now. Fleet Street is almost impassable; Ludgate Hill shows a sea of heads; policemen politely request you to "pass along" as you are wedged among a crowd of both sexes in St. Paul's Churchyard, while Cheapside is a mighty stream of people with circling eddies about each eating-house or popular coffee-room.

It is the great dinner-hour that has sounded, and not only in the City, but all over England the summons is eagerly responded to. What are they doing just now in busy, smoky Manchester; in Brummagen, the steely and the brazen; in breezy, tarry Liverpool? Why, rushing for their dinners everybody; merchants, manufacturers, shipbrokers, clerks, and salesmen, artisans, labourers, carmen, firemen, shipmen, all knocking off work at one o'clock and making for the accustomed dining-place.

It has not always been our custom, this one o'clock dinner-hour. Half a century ago, genteel people and the bulk of the professional classes dined at three

in the afternoon. It was a cosy, comfortable hour, allowing plenty of leisure for the pippins and the cut-glass decanters labelled "White" and "Red," each standing in its little bucket on the polished mahogany, and thus gently leading on to the plentiful "tea" and substantial supper which followed with commendable regularity.

The three o'clock dinner-hour was a country usage, derived from our Saxon ancestors, whose noon meal was the principal meal of the day; the noon being the canonical hour of three, and not the solar midday. Ploughing was finished by three, and there was dinner in hall for all connected with the farm or manor. But the mercantile dinner-hour was not far removed from one o'clock even in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Thus it was, anyhow, in Ephesus, if we may credit Shakespeare; for in the "Comedy of Errors" we find Adriana complaining of her husband being late for dinner, the hour then being two, while her sister soothingly suggests:

Perhaps some merchant hath invited him,
And from the mart he's somewhere gone to dinner.

But in those days, as well in London as in Ephesus, people went home to an early dinner, and there is something to be lamented in the general divorce of the world in business and its wife at home in the way of dinner. When people live near their work, and can dine at home with wife and children, all the members of the family fare better, and health and strength are more likely to be preserved. As it is, of the thousands and tens of thousands who pour into the City daily, but a moderate percentage can enjoy a thoroughly satisfactory dinner. The gay young bachelors fare the best, although it may be noticed that as pay-day recedes in the distance so their daily fare becomes more simple and frugal. Working men come next who are not above carrying basins wrapped in cotton handkerchiefs, and who are often found warming up some savoury mess over engine-room or packing-room fire. The worst off is the married clerk with whom money is far too scarce and precious to be squandered on a sufficient meal, and who munches his dry toast, unsweetened by the certainty of a more satisfactory repast when he reaches home.

It is a real treat, any little scene for the dinner-hour loungers of Fleet Street, for those who hang about the narrow passages and entries, and the snug courts on either hand, which are just now permeated with pleasant meaty odours from snug taverns

and eating-houses, too well frequented to need advertisement from outward display. Youths in white aprons and shirt-sleeves dart here and there with trays with dishes steaming under their pewter covers, and distilling fragrance as they are borne along. And from the very door of the old-fashioned tavern which still boasts the sanded floor and boxed compartments of an earlier age, the resounding voice of the head waiter can be heard, as he calls for the chops and steaks that are still—and worthily—the pride of the old house.

But the crowd of witnesses around are not in the way of sharing in any such banquets. A cloud of crude tobacco-smoke fills the air, and for many of the smokers it is probably the only refreshment of the dinner-hour. For many are looking for a job, and others find work slack, and so it is all through the regions where printers most do congregate. Shoe Lane is studded thickly with groups of smokers and gossipers, and all the side-streets show the same pallid but cheerful crowd. And here the lassies come in, binders, sewers, folders, or whatever their callings may be in the world of magazines, journals, blue-books, and pamphlets, but, anyhow, all enjoying their dinner-hour like the rest, although only possessed of elementary notions on the subject of dinner. But if they are content with cake and sweetstuff—which are but poor material for supplying waste tissues—they do not suffer from low spirits in consequence, but are seen parading up and down the roadway arm-in-arm, and occasionally saluting some favoured swain with a vigorous thump on the back. Should a piano-organ chance to be performing in the neighbourhood, it will set all the girls whirling round and round in waltz or polka.

More to the westward along the Strand the same impulse is felt towards eating and drinking, but here the rush is for snatches of meals and snacks of various kinds. Corks are popping, glass and plate are glittering about the counters of popular restaurants. There are actors fresh from rehearsals, journalists just beginning their day, barristers who have rushed out from the Law Courts, a crowd of strangers from all parts of the world, who, whatever may be their country of origin, take kindly to the roast beef of old England and the "creaming London beere." Even Somerset House feels the gentle influence of the hour; about its arid courts trays and dishes may

now be seen to circulate, and the potboy's simple garb may sometimes be seen as he steals along the gloomy corridors.

Although the further westward one goes, the more the dinner-hour is whittled down to a mere affair of luncheon, or, perhaps, of a late breakfast at the club; yet there is still a strong undercurrent of busy people setting in to taverns and eating-houses, while in the great shops and universal emporiums a kind of lull comes over the busy chaffering over laces and ribbons, and all the endless business of shopping, for two-thirds of the assistants are at dinner, and an equal proportion of customers are taking some kind of refreshment. "Meet me in the refreshment department, dear, at one," is the "mot d'ordre" of Mrs. Deputy Commissioner Brown on marital leave of absence from the Punjab, to her friend Mrs. Major Smith of the Staff Corps, as they part on various missions bent. Mighty shoppers are these, and they will despatch whole crates and cases of "fixings" by the next P. and O. boat; but the labour they delight in requires an interval of refreshment, and they take it at one p.m. Another West End scene is in strong contrast to the cheerful bustle of the shoppers. It is at Hyde Park Corner with wan winter sunshine on the misty surroundings. The clock at the lodge shows just past one, and a party of sandwich men have stacked their boards against the railings, the weary, dejected-looking men, and they have hung up their helmets on the spikes, for they are dressed in some travesty of military uniform, and have disposed themselves—a sad row of scarecrows—against the wall. It is their dinner-time, and one or two of them have screws of tobacco which they share with their comrades. And they chew that!

But now to return to the City. Here we have a pleasant scene on Ludgate Hill, with St. Paul's looking down upon the busy turmoil. It is more turmoilish than ever to-day, for half-way up the hill half the roadway is up, and the traffic filtering slowly through the narrow defile is heaped up on either side of the posse till you could walk along the tops of the vehicles almost as easily as along the pavement. The clatter, the confusion of tongues, and general harty-burly is almost overwhelming, while the wind blows bitter cold, and drivers on their chilly perches hunch up their shoulders, and foot passengers stick their

chins in their wraps and drive blindly along. But among the heaps of wooden blocks in the portion of road under repair, a big jovial fire is burning, and seated in a circle round it a party of roadmen are making a hearty meal. It is their dinner-hour as well as other people's, and they have got a can with something hot in it which circulates among them, while something else frizzling on the fire diffuses a pleasant savour around, and with their rammers and tools lying about them, the sturdy fellows are stretched comfortably in the warmth and glow of the fire, quite impervious to the storm of chaff that assails them on every side from the amphitheatre of vehicles.

There is St. Paul's, too, in the dinner-hour; the great expanse of dome and nave, with here and there an arch outlined in gaslight, and a misty film rendering the whole vague and indistinct. A wonderful effect is the soft light in the choir with hazy distances of sculpture and gilded surfaces, and the glow of windows richly dight. The dome resounds with the hollow chime of bells, a sound that murmurs round and round and comes we know not whence. A few score of people are scattered about resting on the rush-bottomed chairs, or curiously scanning the monuments. In that last row of chairs, snugly sheltered by the great basement of the dome, how happily engaged is young Jones, of Lombard Street, with that dark-eyed, vivacious-looking damsel! The softest of whispers only are compatible with the decorum of the place, and the softer the whispers, the closer must be the lips that utter them. You could not have a finer dinner-hour than that.

But the low murmur of the bells circles faster and faster, and looking about you may see a few people making towards one of the recesses of the nave. A clerical-looking gentleman, with an umbrella, who converses affably with the verger, presently reappears in a surplice, and passes within the richly-carven gates of a small side chapel.

Who can say what Sir Christopher had in his mind when he designed these transmontane side chapels? Perhaps they represent the old churches which had a kind of barnacle existence on the flanks or in the crypt of old St. Paul's, and that fell into powder in the furnace heat of the great fire. Anyhow, here is a little chapel well adapted for a small service, and fairly well filled with a small number of people,

while a small harmonium gives a sufficient volume of sound to reach the vaulted ceiling. It is the dinner-hour service, and it is soon over, and we are once more on the pavement, and looking into the shop windows of St. Paul's Churchyard.

Here we meet with Binks, who is hurrying along, quite regardless of the shop windows, of the pretty girls who are flocking to the confectioners', or of the penny toy sellers, who find that St. Paul's Churchyard in the dinner-hour is one of the best pitches in the City. The novelty is a skeleton that dances charmingly round a string, really very ingenious and quite *fin-de-siècle*. But Binks has other toys in his mind, for that playground of his, his garden at Brixton. "Going to buy some roses, my boy," he cries; "come along!"

Roses in Cheapside! But here they are all laid out in bundles on the floor of the auction-room—that room with its pleasant musky savour, mingled with earthly odours of bulbs and orchids, and strange growths from distant climes, of Oriental matting and of fragrant tobaccos. And just now bulbs are going assorted in dinner-hour lots to suit small purchasers.

"A lot of fifty hyacinths, of sorts—five shillings." Bang! "Another lot—five shillings." Bang! And so on—as if the auctioneer's hammer were regulated by a pendulum, of which every beat brought down five shillings. But the roses are a long way down in the catalogue, and we will leave Binks to expend his dinner money on hyacinths and roses, while we take a turn along Cheapside.

Now we are fairly under the sound of Bow bells, or, at all events, of the one little bell that is tinkling up in the beautiful high tower that is certainly one of the great Sir Christopher's masterpieces. If you knew the Church of St. Mary de Arcubus, say, twenty years ago, you may remember how it seemed always locked up in its rusty iron railings, which were garnished all the week through with the stock-in-trade of a man who sold dog-collars and chains, and who generally knew of a dog that would suit any intending purchaser. He seemed to have acquired a fixity of tenure in those railings, that were so crusted with dust and mud that it seemed as if they were scarcely opened once in a hundred years.

But to-day all is changed, the iron gates are thrown back, and a stream of people passing in at the doors. There is a good deal of portico about Bow Church; first an

enclosed porch, and then a vestibule paved with gravestones—handsome old tablets, some showing armorial bearings, and others cherubs flying, and last trumpets sounding, but almost worn away by the footsteps of succeeding generations. But once through the great swing-doors, and the contrast offered to the chilly, misty scene outside is amazing. The many hundred standards are lighted up, the church is cheery, warm, and comfortable, and what is more, it is filled, not to say crammed, with people. The male sex predominate, but there are a good many nice-looking young women, and there is not a vacant seat, while rows of people are ranged on benches all round the walls, and numbers are standing about the doors. There is a fine organ, too, and an organist who can bring out its power; and a fine hymn is being sung with the full swing of hundreds of good voices, filling every cranny of the building, and echoing through the vaults beneath in deep reverberations.

Pleasantly florid is the interior of St. Mary-le-Bow, with gilt Corinthian capitals and lofty round arches picked out in gold—pleasant and florid, and even gay, as yellow streaks of sunshine stream in through the clerestory windows, bringing out the carving and the gold, and the rich colours of the east windows. And grand it is to see such an assemblage of sturdy, steady-looking young fellows, that any city might be proud of, and with good, honest, frank-looking girls to keep them company.

A lecture short and to the point; another hymn, given with equal spirit; and then the dinner-hour congregation disperses, although a goodly number remain behind to hear the clever young organist's performance to the very last.

For those who are interested in City churches there is no better time for visiting them than the dinner-hour, for nearly all are open then, and in very many some short, simple service is given on most of the week-days.

Another pleasant resort for the dinner, or, indeed, for any other, hour is the Guildhall Library, the freest of the free libraries, with a capital newspaper and magazine-room which, during the dinner-hour, is filled as full as it will hold. And the same may be said of the public news-rooms, of which so many have recently been opened under the Public Libraries Act, and which are a grand resource for

the dinnerless and unemployed. It is rather sad, indeed, to think of the numbers of youths and young men whose only dinner is derived from a perusal of the daily papers and comic weeklies—how dismal seems a joke to the hungry!—white-faced lads and youths who ought to be building up their frames with substantial food.

From this point of view it is a pleasure to dive into one of the many cocoa-rooms that bear the name of Lockhart. There are grades of dignity even in such democratic institutions—the general room, which is something of a scramble for the good things that are being served at the counter; the first-class room, where the prices are no higher, but where you may find a seat and a table without much difficulty; and an even extra first-class room, where "attendance" is given for a small extra fee. Eggs and bacon, sausage and mashed, are perhaps, the favourite dishes among the young people who really mean dining, but very nourishing and also palatable are the steak puddings at twopence and fourpence. Here and there a young man who means building up tissue brings in a steak which he has bought himself at the butcher's, and hands it over to be cooked, when it is duly labelled and forwarded to the grid. With sixpence in his pocket any one can go to these rooms, and make a very satisfactory meal as times go—and even have money left for a penny smoke. And with this he may wander about during the rest of the dinner-hour with a heart as light as his pocket, and admire the wonders of the modern Babylon, which is not such a wicked old lady after all, nor so stony-hearted as some will have it, if you only take her the right way.

"OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL.

CHAPTER XI.

IN the meantime, Meadowlands was given over to doctors and nurses. During the first few days Mrs. Egerton rarely left her husband's room.

The doctors gave but little hope of his recovery.

Nurses came down from London to take charge of the invalid, but either she or Gilbert was in constant attendance in the sick-room.

She would slip out of the house as often as she could to see Wilfred. But Gilbert, after the first week—and his services were no more required as his brother began to regain his strength—never went near him.

In that mixture of routine and general disturbance which prevails in a sick-house, it was easier for those in the secret to come and go between the house and underground chamber. Wilfred Egerton, thanks to a magnificent constitution, and perhaps a little to his iron will, steadily improved.

As he grew stronger, the restraint and confinement of his dreary hiding-place became daily more irksome. Gilbert had thought out a plan by which he hoped to get his brother safely out of the country; but until he was able to travel nothing could be done to carry it out. The risk would be great, and with the hue and cry after him, and the certainty that every port was being watched, there seemed but the smallest chance of the plan succeeding. Every day's delay made the matter more perilous. That Dornton, especially after his late bold move, would never accept failure now, Gilbert was sure. His complete disappearance from the scene brought no comfort. He was certain to be on the watch.

Eason was slowly improving, under the care of a niece from London.

Molloy, who was believed by the country to have been the man who fired the shot, was still at liberty. The impossibility of being able to come to any terms with him added to the anxiety of those in the secret. At any moment he might return and give the lie to the general belief. His whereabouts might even now be known to the police, who, for reasons of their own, might be keeping the fact silent. They could only trust to the fidelity of the poacher, and the chance that he had divined the state of affairs, and was with cunning devotion keeping out of the way. Wilfred Egerton had once, when they were lads together, saved him at the risk of his own life from a dreadful death by fire. To Gilbert, this fact itself of being obliged to let, for the sake of one of themselves, the suspicion of guilt rest on a man who, in spite of his career, was innocent of this last crime, was not the least of the humiliations of the situation.

He resented on his brother all the anxiety and shame of those dark days.

Hope now and then caught a glimpse of this bitterness. It shocked and revolted her.

It was terrible to think that it was his own brother who had roused this hatred. The horror of it even slew the pity which had been awakened in her by his devotion to his father. Even the gentle consideration he showed for his mother, through all that trying time, scarcely softened her.

Day by day, though her heart, innocent and ignorant still, had not yet fathomed its own secret, she was being slowly but surely drawn away from any possibility of sympathy with him.

In the daily call made on her own tenderness and devotion in her constant ministering to the outcast's need, the pitilessness of this, his brother, became incomprehensible to her. As it happened, it was she who saw most of Wilfred Egerton.

Her services not being required in the sick-room, her absence from the house was not so much noticed. Mrs. Egerton, her heart torn between her son and her husband, feeling that when she was with the latter, the son who needed her almost more—for he was conscious of her absence,—was alone, continually sent Hope to take her place by his side. If her conscience pricked her, the wound was quickly salved over by the selfishness of her mother's love. Wilfred must be attended to, amused, comforted. Dear little girl as Hope was, it was not likely that she would attract his fickle fancy. Besides, he was in too great trouble now to trifle with any girl's affections, and certainly he would not amuse himself heartlessly with Hope, considering the circumstances and the relation she bore to one of his best friends.

Besides, all unconsciously to herself, perhaps, the vulgarity that tinges pride of birth equally with pride of money may have influenced her conduct. Attached as she was to Hope in her inner consciousness, she always remembered that she was not of their class, though she would have been shocked and indignant if any one had openly accused her of the recollection. Had Hope been the daughter of one in their own set, she would have hesitated far longer before she had consented to her thus setting aside all the conventionalities and etiquette of their order; probably she would not have permitted it.

Hope went willingly enough. She had heard something of the accusation brought against him. It had dismayed her at first. But his mother's faith, and the personal

knowledge she herself gained of him while tending him in his helplessness, gradually kindled in her a generous if romantic confidence in his innocence. In the meantime, Gilbert kept his plans for his brother's escape entirely to himself.

Hope, as the days went on, began to find it very hard to meet the fierce, pathetic entreaty in Wilfred Egerton's dark eyes, when she went to him with no news to give him. He never mentioned his brother, but he would turn away from her, as she left his unspoken question unanswered, with a quick-drawn breath, and restlessly pace to and fro through the narrow chamber. He was singularly lithe and active in his movements. There was something at once supple and strong in his well-knit figure, thin now to emaciation, which never, at any time, bore an ounce of superfluous flesh.

This graceful swiftness of movement, the supple liveness of limb, had always exercised a certain fascination for Hope, who was always powerfully influenced by beauty.

This afternoon, as she sat dumb and sorry, while Wilfred Egerton turned away with that hard-drawn breath, a startling and curious fancy struck her.

A short time before she had been taken to see a panther, newly arrived in the country. There was something now in Wilfred Egerton as he paced restlessly his narrow prison-house that recalled the grace that masked, and, at the same time, revealed the terrible strength, the desperate, heart-sick fierceness of that caged wild creature. The dark velvety eyes, with the flame in their depths, the rigidity of the features, hiding, who could say what fierce passions below, all in some subtle fashion carried out the suggestion.

It had struck her that day as she looked half pitifully at the dumb, entrapped creature that there had been something almost human in the eyes that burned in the still feline face.

Wilfred Egerton turned suddenly to her as she sat looking at him.

The flame died out of his eyes, a slightly amused smile softened his face.

"Well?" he questioned gently.

She blushed scarlet.

Then, as his eyes still searched her face, all the sympathy and pity in her heart welled up, sweeping away the weird fancy.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" she said. "It must be so dreadful for you waiting here and knowing nothing."

"Yes," he said slowly. "But I suppose I shall know soon."

He never uttered a single complaint expressive of mental or physical suffering. He never alluded to his past life, nor mentioned a hope or plan for the future. He never spoke of his father's illness nor his brother's anger. He neither enquired after Eason, nor expressed a regret for having been the cause of his suffering. His mother and Hope kept him acquainted with all that went on outside his prison. He listened always in silence. Hope wondered sometimes if he would have asked them a single question, had not they volunteered the information. Of this last and most shameful accusation brought against him, with all its horrible suggestions and apparently disgraceful cowardice of flight, not even his mother ever spoke. But it haunted—a dark mystery—all the interviews that Hope held with him. Perhaps this reserve and self-control helped to increase the interest she felt in his fate. Sometimes his silence terrified her, sometimes it filled her with anger, sometimes—and this later phase of feeling deepened in intensity as the days went on, and she was more and more in his society—she longed to hear him say but one word of denial, or justification, of regret, or remorse for the past, and hope for the future. The stillness and dumbness were but a mask. What lay hid beneath? If only she could have seen. She felt that his quietness was not a mere soulless, brutal callousness, but the self-repression of a man who, with a fire burning out his heart's life, turns an expressionless face to the curious condemning eyes of his fellow-creatures.

She knew that he was a sinner. But in her own simplicity and innocence, and her deep religious faith, she remembered that all sinners are called and may come, if they desire it, to repentance.

Outwardly, their intercourse, except for the unusual circumstances attached to it, was of the most commonplace kind. As soon as he was strong enough to take an interest in matters of every-day life, she discussed with him every possible subject in which she felt he could find amusement or interest. She even studied up the papers to gain an idea of politics, and was greatly relieved to find that he took no more interest in the affairs of either party than she did herself.

On the subject of books and music and art, they had many interesting conversations. Of people, and life, and the ways of the

world generally, of which his experience was so far wider than her own, he would talk, while she sat almost silent, interested, fascinated, wondering.

It seemed to her almost impossible that a man of his age could have seen, learned, experienced so much. It was not, however, that he was a great talker. It was rather that everything he said was interesting, full of suggestions of curious adventures, strange and thrilling experiences, and yet again all related with a simple indifference, as if such marvels were but the commonest every-day events of a man's life.

But as she listened, enthralled, deep in her heart lived always the earnest longing that he would justify himself in the eyes of those who loved him, break once through the mystery that darkened his real personality. There was one confidence only which he had made her. He told her how good her father had been to him. Hitherto she had known nothing as to how the acquaintance between her father and the Egertons had begun. Loving her father as she did, the kindness he had shown Wilfred Egerton proved a new link of sympathy between herself and his fate. It seemed to countenance her own acquaintance with him. It was at Mrs. Egerton's request that she said nothing to her father about Wilfred being in hiding there. It hurt her a little to keep the secret. It seemed hardly necessary. Her father, who had been so good already to him, and who was so loyal and kind to all, might have been safely trusted with the secret.

This very morning she had received a letter from him, with an undernote of loving anxiety for her welfare, expressing a fear lest the house of sickness should prove too depressing for her, and that she might be over-taxing her strength.

Wilfred Egerton, glancing at her face again, came back to where she was sitting. He saw that for the moment she had forgotten him.

"You, at any rate, will be glad to see the last of this musty old hiding-place," he said with a smile, and for the first time something caressing touched his eyes.

She started, the regret stifled for a moment by a rush of conflicting feelings.

"No," she said, laughing, though she glanced away a little restlessly. "It has been a new experience."

"I hope you will never have any similar ones," he said. "You should

never have come back after that first day!" After a pause, during which the light that had touched his eyes died out again. They rarely smiled.

"It is not fair, Mr. Egerton! You promised that you would never allude to that unfortunate occasion again!" she said impatiently. Then to change the subject: "I have often wondered how you managed to find out this place," glancing round the room; "and how the secret was ever lost."

"It was lucky for me that it was," he said with a careless laugh. "But you know that we are a younger branch of the family and have only been in possession about fifty years. It was in turning over some very old MSS. in the Muniment Room that I chanced to find a clue to the underground passage, of which the existence had been only a tradition for many years previous to our coming. I was about sixteen then, and I set to work to discover the entrance. I succeeded and found the passage, which was then almost choked up with rubbish. Every spare moment in which I could work, undetected, I used to spend clearing out the place, and repairing generally at night. I have worked all night through, and more than once nearly came to an untimely end. The ventilation, bad enough now, was then practically nil, and once I was knocked senseless by a fall of brickwork!" He pointed to an ugly scar on his temple. "I often used to think I would give it up, that it was a useless fag; only, somehow, I have never been able to give up anything I have once undertaken. And to clear that passage became a sort of fetish to me. For the time sleep, and food, and any other occupation, became practically of no importance. It took me about a year, off and on, to get through it, repairing as I went. It seems a considerable loss of time and energy now, doesn't it?"

He sat on the edge of the old oak table, looking slowly round the room with, it seemed to Hope, a slight sneer at his own perseverance and courage.

"You would be worse off now," she retorted quickly, "had not you persevered."

"Moral—do your best in that station of life," he said, with an amused laugh, bringing his eyes back to her face. "And it is an edifying principle when you profit yourself by the faithfully carried out transaction."

"Mr. Egerton!" indignantly. But there was a pained look on her face, and

it was the look that appealed most to him.

"I am afraid my 'doxy' is the 'other man's 'doxy,'" he said; but there was a kindly note in his mockery. "And if you will grant, for a moment, that a man has, at the best, but, we will say eighty years—which is extending his license a little—in which to enjoy himself, and after that is extinguished, like a burnt-out lamp, you will understand my version of the theory contained in the catechism of our god-fathers."

"But I don't grant it," flushing hotly, girlishly ashamed at his mockery, but earnest in the defence of her faith. "This life is not the end."

"I am not arguing that debated matter; I am only simply asking you to grant a possible fact, just for the moment. If eighty years be the span of our existence, will you tell me whether there is any reason good enough why I should, in the brief portion of life allotted to me, sacrifice any advantage or amusement which would benefit me now, so that some possible remote descendant of mine should, when I myself am a mere speck of dust in the ages, enjoy the satisfaction of holding an improved theory of education, or an increased knowledge of the laws of sanitation, or modified views on the subject of wire-pulling in politics?"

"That's all wrong—and, Mr. Egerton, I can't bear to hear you talk like that."

"I confess that I don't care whether that remote descendant of mine wins the Derby of that distant and enlightened age when I am out of the running. Why should I? What difference can it make to me, situated as I am now, for instance, that there should be some infinitesimal improvement in his moral or social position? I shan't be here to share it."

"But you cannot go out like the lamp you speak of. Yet—even supposing for an instant it were possible—for your own sake——"

"That is why I laboured so conscientiously to clear away the rubbish from the dismal passage. It was typical of life, that passage, with its dreariness and its mystery. You have given yourself away, Miss Brown!" with a lazy laugh.

"I have not!" She rose, flushed and

indignant. "You say those things just to trap me; I don't believe a bit in what you say. Why, even if our life did go out like a spark, it would not alter the fact that good is good, and evil evil, and that at all cost we should work for the good, not because it benefits us, or will even benefit those to come, but simply because it is the good."

"That is too difficult and dull a creed for me," he said gently. "Not holding your enthusiastic belief in that extremely problematical future. Even your Saint Paul owned that life under the circumstances of eternal annihilation wasn't good enough; and yet his life was certainly ordered by that abstract principle, for which you are claiming so much."

There was no note of mockery in his voice, and yet she could not feel certain that he was in earnest.

She looked at him, the man who had spent his youth in the pursuit of all the ignoble pleasures of life, who had bartered name, position, honour, a father's love, a mother's happiness, a brother's friendship, for the gratification of reckless passions. It was but the echo of his lawless life which had reached her ears.

As yet she only knew, with the instinctive knowledge of innocent ignorance, the existence of the black sin-mystery which shadows the life of the world.

She knew that he had been wicked—as she had learned the word wickedness—but of the depths of such evil as the world knew she was almost as ignorant as a child.

Even now, while she shrank from his sins, in her simple faith in the truth of repentance and divine forgiveness, she thought most of the possibility within him of higher things. As she looked at him, hurt, shrinking, sorry, a sudden inspiration of the divine truth shone into her perplexed soul.

"Tell me," she said. "Have you found it more worth living from your point of view?"

For a second he looked back at her. Then one of his slow, sweet smiles crossed his lips. But it did not touch his eyes, and it seemed to the girl that they were the saddest she had ever seen.

"I have chosen," he said.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TEN minutes after Mrs. Romayne's departure Julian was standing before Mrs. Pomeroy, his whole demeanour typical of the man who lingers, knowing that he should linger no longer.

"What a nuisance appointments are!" he said, with a boyish frankness of discontent which was irresistible. "I wish I could stay a little longer, but I know I oughtn't." He laughed quite ruefully, and fixed a pair of ardent eyes on Miss Pomeroy's demurely averted face. "It's been such an awfully jolly affair, hasn't it? And it's so awfully jolly to have you in town again"—this, with delightful deference, to Mrs. Pomeroy. "Well, I really must go, you know! Good-bye! Perhaps you won't be staying very much longer?"

"If you stay here bemoaning yourself very much longer we shall probably leave before you do!" suggested Miss Pomeroy, with the rather faint smile which was the only sign of amusement she ever gave, and which always accompanied her own mild witticisms. Julian turned to her eagerly.

"Now, that's awfully unkind!" he said. "You won't bully me like that in Queen Anne Street, will you?" The term "bullying" was so profoundly inapplicable to Miss Pomeroy's words that its use suggested a certain amount of arrangement rather than absolute spontaneity about Julian's speech. But exaggeration was the fashion, and not to be commented on. "Come in

a very kind frame of mind, won't you?" he went on pleadingly.

"Am I a very violent person?" the girl answered, with the same smile. "Good-bye!" She held out her hand as she spoke, and Julian took it with laughing reluctance.

"You are an absolutely heartless person," he said daringly, "to dismiss me like this! However, I suppose you are right. If you didn't dismiss me I probably shouldn't go, and I really ought, you know!"

"You've told us that before; now do it!" was the answer. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" returned Julian, with mock meekness. He shook hands again, which seemed hardly necessary, and then he turned away.

But the necessity which enforced his departure had apparently slackened its pressure on him by the time he actually left the house. As he walked away down the street there was no sign about him of that haste which should characterise a man who has lingered to the risking of an appointment, or who has, indeed, any engagement in immediate prospect. The bride and bridegroom had already left, and people were beginning to go, and until he reached the end of the street in which was Mrs. Halse's house, he was passed every instant by carriages to whose occupants his hat had to be smilingly lifted. Then he turned into a main thoroughfare, and hailed a hansom—still not in the least like a man in a hurry. He gave the cabman an address in the Temple, and was driven away.

His face as he went would have been a curious study to any onlooker possessed of the key to its expression; to any onlooker who could have detected the

constant struggle for dominance between something that seemed to lie behind its new artificiality and that artificiality itself, evidently maintained under an instinctive sense of the chances of observation. It was not until he turned his key in the lock of a set of chambers in the Temple that the boyish vivacity died wholly out of his face; he went into his room—he shared the chambers with another embryo barrister—shutting the door behind him, and as he did so he seemed to have shut in, not the light-hearted young fellow who had paid the cabman in the street below, but another man altogether. No one looking at him now could doubt that this was the real Julian Romaine of to-day, as certainly as that light-hearted young fellow had been the real Julian Romaine of a year ago. This was a man with a hard, angry face; a face on which the anger stood revealed, not as the expression of the moment, but as the normal expression of a mind always sore, always at war, always fiercely implacable.

The room was plainly, almost barely furnished, and there was no trace of any of the luxury that surrounded him in Queen Anne Street. His smart, carefully got-up figure looked absolutely incongruous among such unusual surroundings, as he crossed to the window, and flinging himself down in a shabby easy-chair, lighted a cigarette. He threw his cigarette-case on the table, and then drew out of the breast-pocket of his coat a couple of letters.

He had read them before, evidently, but as evidently they had lost none of their interest for him. He read them both through attentively, and as he did so there came to his mouth a set which his mother, could she have seen it, would have recognised instantly; which any one, indeed, must have recognised who had ever seen his dead father. Both the letters dealt with money matters; one was from a bookmaker, the other from a broker whose name was far from bearing an unblemished character in the City; and both referred to large sums of money recently made on the turf and on the Stock Exchange by Julian Romaine.

He flung the last on the table as he finished it, and there was an expression in his eyes of reckless, rebellious triumph not good to see.

"It's a good haul!" he said, half aloud. "A good haul! Now, with what I've got already——" He rose and went across to

the writing-table, unlocked a drawer, and taking out various papers, began to make rapid calculations.

Then—his eyes hard and intent on his work—he stretched out his hand and felt in the drawer for another paper. He took out an envelope, and drew out the letter it contained without glancing at it. A folded paper fell out as he did so, and as though the slight sound had roused him, he glanced at it quickly, and from it to the open letter in his hand. Apparently it was not the letter to which he had intended to refer, for his face changed suddenly and completely.

"I can't take your money. Try and understand that I can't!—Clemence."

His fingers tightened upon the thin sheet of paper until the knuckles whitened, and the intent, eager calculation vanished utterly from his face, overwhelmed as it seemed by the fierce tumult of warring passions that struggled now in every line. Impotent anger which was the more violent for something within itself which was not anger; reckless defiance; a wild, raging desperation behind all, which was nearly hatred; all these emotions were faintly shadowed forth on his face as he stared down at the few simple words. All these emotions had been surging in his heart during the six months that were gone, and it was their unceasing strife and tumult which was rousing into life the new Julian Romaine, latent for so many years.

It was to that which was least broadly painted on his face that all these passionate forces owed their life. As with a wild animal wounded by a dart, and feeling that dart—lodged in his side—pricking and piercing him, who plunges wildly hither and thither, chafing and striving in blind, brute fashion to rid himself of the sensation he cannot understand; and in his very efforts presses in the cause of his pain, increases his sufferings, and again redoubles his struggles and his fury, not knowing that he is his own tormentor; so it had been in a subtler, alighter sense with Julian Romaine during the last six months. The dart in his case was double-edged; its edges were the strange weak reality of his love for Clemence, and a stinging sense of shame. It had lodged in that almost inanimate better part of his nature. He had left that little room in Camden Town smarting and wincing under it, and it had never ceased to prick him since. Scarcely less blind and ignorant under such circumstances

than "a beast having no understanding" in his total want of all principle, except the principles of worldly wisdom, with his utterly dormant moral perception—his morality, such as it was, being the merest matter of habit and conventionality—the effect on him of the smart was first the developement in him of a blind, unreasoning resentment; and then, as anger proved of no avail, a passionate rousing and rising of all his latent forces in repudiation of his discomfort.

To charge upon some one else the difficulties which he had created for himself, to provide some object against which his blind sense of wrath and rebellion could pit itself, was a primary instinct with such a nature as Julian's, so situated, and that object was ready to his hand. The first article in the faith of the new Julian Romaine was the belief that he had been forced into his present position by his mother; that he had been parted from his wife by his mother; that he had been covered with humiliation by his mother. Every fresh stab, every movement of revolt as that two-edged dart pressed itself deeper into his consciousness with every struggle he made for freedom, added something to the account he held against her, increased the bitterness of his resentment against her, and brought it one degree nearer to hatred. His love for her, in spite of all its charm of expression, had been the merest boyish sentiment; with no roots deeper than those afforded by easy companionship and apparent indulgence; founded on habit and expediency rather than on respect. Real devotion would have seemed out of place in the atmosphere of affectation and superficiality in which he had been reared, and he had known only its travesty. On this, the first real conflict between his will and hers, that travesty showed itself for what it was, and shrivelled into nothingness. To free himself from her control, became the one object and desire of his life. In doing this, and in doing this only, to his distorted perceptions, lay release from the stinging, goading misery of his present life, and to do this one means only was adequate—money. With money at his command the victory, as he conceived it, would be his. Some centre, some main-spring had necessarily to grow up in the confused strivings and blind, desperate impulses of a newly-awakened nature, and gradually that centre had declared itself in an unreasoning determination to make money.

But there were in Julian Romaine tendencies, latent, or nearly so, throughout his youth and early manhood; manifested during those easy, untempted periods only in a slight superficiality, a slight want of perception as to the boundary line between truth and falsehood; but radical factors in his being. In the shock and jar of the mental struggle and quickening involved in the continued presence in his consciousness of that remorseless dart, these tendencies leapt into over-stimulated life and grew, strengthened, and developed, with the unnatural rapidity of such life until his whole character seemed to be overshadowed by them. In Julian Romaine's being, woven in and out with the threads which had hitherto seemed so pliable and colourless; those threads of all shades, from pure white to dark grey, which make up character in every man; were sundry grim black threads—threads such as are only to be plucked out when the very heart's blood of the man has spent itself in the struggle, and when in that struggle he has come very near to Heaven. It may be that the sins of the fathers are indeed visited on the children in this sense; in the dictation of the form taken by that struggle with evil which is every man's portion; and sometimes—for purposes of which no man may presume to judge—in the exceptional agony of that struggle. Julian Romaine, the son of a liar and thief, and, moreover, of a woman whose morality was the morality of conventionality and nothing more, had an instinctive faculty for, an instinctive inclination towards, dishonesty of word and deed. Such a twist of his moral consciousness as had been predicted for him, a little child of five years old, by Dr. Aston, had lain dormant among the possibilities of his being throughout the nineteen years that intervened. It was this inheritance which, in the sudden upheaval of his moral nature, had awakened, asserted itself, and seized, as it were, the first place in his nature.

Throughout his boyhood, easy as it had been, untouched by any strong passion or desire, he had lied now and again, naturally and instinctively. He had lied to save himself trouble, to save himself some slight reproach—as he had lied to his mother on the subject of his visit to Alexandria to save himself from the confession of having forgotten her commission. He had lied to Clemence from first to last, and the first prick of that dart, which was now his constant companion, had touched

him when he first felt shame for those lies. But there was a reckless, calculating deception about his life now which went deeper and meant more. He lied to his mother with every word and action, and with the unreasoning cruelty of his mental attitude towards her—there is nothing towards which a man can be so heartless as the object to which he has transferred his own wrong-doing—he hugged his deception of her, and revelled in the sense of independence and power it gave him. The endless deception which that one fundamental falsity necessitated, radiated on every side. To please his mother, as he told himself with an ugly smile, he had flirted with Miss Pomeroy in the early part of the winter until—a certain distance in her manner to him melting—he had balled her departure for Cannes as a blessed reprieve. He had flirted with her this afternoon at Mrs. Halse's, excited by the news contained in the two letters he had since re-read, reckless in the prospect of release they brought nearer to him, and with a certain delight in the daring defiance of consequences. He had lied to Lord Garstin when that good-natured mentor had let fall a warning word as to the "bad form" of gambling; he lied to his coach when his frequent absences were commented on.

In that desperate craving for money, in which all the passion of his life was centering itself, dishonesty of deed was the natural and inevitable corollary of dishonesty of word. The possession of money was his one object in life; his conscience as to the means by which that money was to be obtained he deliberately put into abeyance for the time being. He had become possessed in the course of the last six months of some thousands, not one of which had been earned by honest work; much of which had come to him by more than questionable means.

That two-edged dart must have been finely tempered that it never seemed to blunt! The dormant life in that higher part of him, to which it had penetrated, must have been life indeed, that it should throb and quiver stronger and stronger, side by side with all that was lowest and worst in him, making the struggle grow always fiercer, and goading him on and on. The dart owed its edge, the life its growing sensitiveness, to a touch which lay always on Julian's consciousness, haunting him night and day. Not to be driven away or obliterated, not to be crowded out of his

soul by any stress of evil passion, a white light on the soiled, tangled web of his life, which shone steadily in the strength of a power no struggle of his could touch, was the thought of Clemence. Clemence, who had trusted him; Clemence, hoping, longing, loving him, as he knew in every wretched fibre; Clemence, for whose presence he longed at times with a heart-sickness of longing which reacted in a very orgy of passionate bitterness. He had received a note from her a few days after her disappearance, telling him in a few simple words that she had got work; that she relied on him not to drive her out of it by trying to see her until he "was ready," as she phrased it. Again and again a reckless impulse to see her, and force his will upon her, had seized him, but something had always held him back. Again and again he had sent her money, always to have it returned to him with a little line of hope or patience. In the reception of those notes; in the writhing love, and longing, and shame they stirred in him, the dart went home and tortured him indeed.

He crushed the sheet of common note-paper almost fiercely in his hand now, and thrust it away to the back of the drawer from which it had come. He caught up the paper which had fallen from it—the cheque he had sent her three days before—and tore it savagely into fragments. Then he swept the papers on which he had been busy unheedingly into a drawer, locked it sharply, and rose, white to the very lips.

"It can't be long now," he muttered. "It shan't be! Men make their piles in a day—in an hour; why should not I? It shan't be long!"

He stood a moment, his hand clenched, his features compressed, his eyes full of a sullen fire. Then he turned sharply away and left the room.

There was no trace of any fire about him, however, except the harmless irradiation of youth and good spirits, when he opened the door of his mother's drawing-room a few minutes before their dinner-hour. He had spent the intervening hour at his club, the most lightly good-natured and thoroughly easy-going and irresponsible young man there, and there was precisely the same character about him now as he crossed the room to his mother.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THERE had been a slight, sudden movement as Julian opened the door, as

though Mrs. Romaine had changed her attitude quickly. She was leaning forward now, looking at an illustrated paper, but the cushions behind her were tumbled and crushed, as if she had been leaning back on them, and leaning heavily. She was wearing a tea-gown, and she seemed to keep her face rather carefully in shadow.

"Rather an amusing party, wasn't it?" she said lightly, looking up as he came in. "Everybody goes to that woman's. I can't imagine why. Well, and is there any news, sir?"

"I'm afraid not," returned Julian gaily. "I've spent an hour at the club to try and pick up some crumbs for you, but there was nothing going."

The manner of each to the other was precisely the same, tête-à-tête, as it had been when they addressed one another incidentally in the course of general conversation. The very familiarity between them had a flavour of artificiality about it, and that flavour of artificiality was mainly given, strangely enough, by Mrs. Romaine rather than by Julian. It was her manner, not his, that lacked ease and overdid the spontaneity. There was a certain slight strain about her gaiety, which had grown on it during the past month, and which was more perceptible now that the two were alone together. They chatted brightly about men and things, but she never asked him a single personal question, though at any incidental allusion let fall by him as to his doings a faint contraction of the muscles about her eyes gave her a hungry, concentrated look, as of a creature catching at a crumb. It seemed to be in a great measure that tendency to keen intentness of expression which had so greatly altered her face.

"You see I've been lazy!" she said lightly, indicating her dress with a slight gesture as they sat down to dinner. They were going out in the evening, and she usually dressed before dinner on such occasions. "I really couldn't be bothered to dress before!"

The lamplight was full on her face now, and Julian, his attention drawn to her by the words, saw that she looked frightfully haggard and worn under her paint and her little air of gaiety. Paint had ceased to be an appendage of full dress with her since her three days' illness. The combination added a touch of repulsion to his feeling towards her. But his tone as he answered her was the tone of affectionate

concern, over-elaborated by the merest shade only.

"You've not over-tired yourself, I hope, dear?" he said. "I don't believe you ought to go out again to-night, do you know!"

Mrs. Romaine's thin fingers were tearing fiercely at the pocket-handkerchief in her lap as he spoke, and her eyes were bright with pain. It seemed as though her ear had caught that subtle shade of over-elaboration, though they must have been quick indeed to do so. But she answered almost before he had finished speaking in a rather high-pitched tone of eager determination.

"Silliest of boys," she said; "the topic is threadbare. I am quite well! Oh, it is very evident that my retiring to bed for a day or two is an unparalleled event, or you would not be quite so slow in grasping the fact that it is possible to recover after such a terrific crisis! Now, do promise not to talk any more about what you don't in the least understand!"

The gaiety of her tone was fictitious, even to Julian's unheeding ear, but he took it up with a mental shrug of his shoulders. It was not his fault, he told himself, if she would overdo herself for the sake of a little excitement.

He told himself the same thing, carelessly enough, when he put her into her carriage two or three hours later. It was early; Mrs. Romaine had declared the party to be insufferably dull and had stayed only half an hour, during which time she had been as vivacious and attractive as usual. But towards the end her eyes had become feverishly bright, and Julian, as he took her out, could feel that she was trembling from head to foot.

"Are you coming home?" she said to him.

"Well, if you don't mind, dear, I was thinking of going to look up Loring at the club."

A breath of relief parted Mrs. Romaine's lips, and she answered hastily. Apparently she had no desire for her son's company on her way home.

"Go, by all means!" she said, "Of course I don't mind!"

She pulled up the window almost abruptly, nodding to him with a smile, the singular ghastliness of which was, presumably, referable to some effect of gaslight. Then as the carriage rolled away she sank back and let her face relax into an expression of utter weariness, with a little gasping

catch of her breath as of deadly physical exhaustion.

The introduction of Loring's name had been a mere picturesqueness on Julian's part, but he did intend to go to the club, and he carried his intention into effect. He glanced round the smoking-room as he went in to see if Loring were there, but the fact that he was not visible in no way affected his serenity. He was so altered from the boy of a twelvemonth before, and his intercourse with Loring had been so completely suspended during the period of his development, that their friendship seemed now to belong to some previous phase of his existence; it was his sense that he had passed utterly out of touch with the man with whom he had once been intimate, together with a conviction that Loring's keen perceptions would be by no means a desirable factor in his surroundings at the moment, that had dictated his demonstration of delight at Loring's reappearance. An outward show of enthusiasm was a very effective blind, in his opinion.

His manner was regulated on the same principle on Loring's appearance in the smoking-room about half an hour later. He was on his way to the card-room, and he was anything but pleased at the frustration of his plans in this direction; but his reception of Loring indicated rather that he had spent the last half-hour in watching for him.

"Here you are at last, old man!" he cried. "I thought you'd turn up some time or other! What became of you this afternoon? I never saw you after you disappeared with my mother."

The two men had met close to the door, and they were still standing, Loring, as blasé and imperturbable-looking as usual, with his observant eyes on Julian's face.

"I didn't care to spoil sport!" he returned with a significant smile. "You seemed to be particularly well employed!"

Julian laughed—the conscious, not ill-pleased laugh which lay in his part. Such contingencies were all incidental to the situation.

"Oh, come, old boy," he said deprecatingly. Then he laughed again, and added: "I suppose my mother said something to you?"

"No!" returned Loring quietly. "I happen to have eyes, you see!"

"Don't make magnifying-glasses of them, then!" was the laughing retort. "Now then, there are several fellows here who have been asking for you."

But as Julian glanced round he became aware that the room chanced to be almost empty. Loring understood at the same time that he had wished to make the conversation general and impersonal, and a slight smile touched his lips.

Marston Loring had various reasons of his own for not intending to allow himself to be eluded by Julian Romaine. The change in the young man alone would have excited his curiosity; and sundry details which had already come to his knowledge, notably one across which he had stumbled in the City that morning, had quickened that curiosity. His suspicions of the preceding autumn that there was something behind Julian's life as it appeared on the surface were by no means forgotten by him. His departure for Africa had taken him out of the way of the crisis, but he more than half suspected that a crisis there had been. The connection between the present and the past, and the means by which it could be most advantageously applied to the furtherance of his own ends, were the problems he had set himself to solve.

"We're rather in luck!" he said. "We can have a quiet chat together."

He established himself lazily and comfortably as he spoke, as Julian with much apparent satisfaction flung himself into another chair, and took out his cigar-case.

Julian's questions followed one another thick and fast. His interest in his friend's life during the last six months seemed to be inexhaustible in its intelligence and sympathy. He had a great deal to tell, too; and he told it so fluently and gaily as almost to disguise the fact that the allusions to his own doings were of the most superficial type. But at last there was a pause. Julian was pulling out his watch, and saying something about going home, when Loring lighted a fresh cigar and opened the proceedings—as he conceived them.

"I heard of you in the City this morning!" he said nonchalantly.

There was no pause in the movement with which Julian returned his watch to his pocket; nothing, absolutely, to betray the fact that the words were a surprise to him. Yet they were a surprise, and an exceedingly unpleasant one. His transactions in the City he had arranged to keep secret; that their nature should become known was eminently undesirable, and he had decided that the fact itself would be inconsistent with his pose before

the world. That Loring should be the man to unearth them was exceptionally unfortunate.

"Did you?" he said lightly; "and who was saying what of me in the City—a vague locality, by-the-bye."

"The introduction of your name was accidental—accidents will happen, you know, even in Adams's office. Is that a definite locality enough to please you?"

Julian burst into a boyish laugh and flung himself back in his chair; he carried his cigar to his lips as he did so, not noticing apparently that it had gone out. Loring noticed it, however.

"What a fellow you are, Loring," he cried. "You've not been in England three days before you unearth a poor chap's most private little games! I say, you'll keep it dark, won't you? I wouldn't have it come round to my mother, you know! She's so awfully generous to me, and it might hurt her feelings."

There was an ingenuous frankness and confidence in his voice which gave to the whole affair the aspect of a youthful escapade. Loring smiled as he answered:

"I wouldn't have a hand in hurting Mrs. Romaine's feelings for the world." He paused a moment, and then added carelessly, as if the whole transaction was the merest matter of course: "Been doing much?"

Julian shook his head.

"No, of course not," he said lightly. "Only a little occasional lark, don't you know. I leave the big things to clever fellows like you. By-the-bye, Loring, I'd no idea you did anything in that way."

Loring puffed slowly at his cigar before he answered.

"I'm an old hand," he said nonchalantly. "I wait for certainties, my boy!" He paused again. "To tell you the truth," he said slowly, fastening a keen, cleverly-veiled gaze on Julian's face, "I did not ask the question altogether idly. It occurred to me that if you had made anything worth mentioning you might be on the look-out for a means of—well, we'll put it mildly and say—increasing it."

There was considerable meaning in Loring's voice, careless as it was. Julian became very still, and into his eyes there crept an eager, hungry light which harmonised ill with the fixed nonchalance of the rest of his features as he answered with a laugh:

"I don't know the fellow who could refuse to admit that soft impeachment!

We're all in the same boat as far as that goes, I take it. You haven't got a good thing up your sleeve, old man, have you?"

Loring smiled ambiguously.

"Most 'good things' would come to an untimely end if every one with a finger in them spread them abroad, my boy!" he observed. "Since it can't concern you personally—if you've no capital—we'll say no more about it."

A certain amount of Loring's practice dealt with financial affairs; he was no mean authority on City matters, and there was something about his manner indescribably provocative. Julian leaned forward with a movement of irrepressible eagerness.

"Is it really a good thing?" he said. He spoke with a quick, low-toned directness which put aside the fencing of the previous dialogue, and replied not to what Loring had said, but to what he had implied. Loring looked him full in the face and answered laconically and significantly:

"Rather!"

The hungry light was burning fiercely in Julian's eyes, and he turned his face away from Loring and began to fidget with an ash-tray lying on the table by him.

"Capital!" he said. "What do you call capital, now?"

"Oh, anything between ten thousand and five-and-twenty thousand," said Loring carelessly.

There was a silence. Julian's brain was working feverishly, and Loring was well content to let it work. At last Julian began to speak in a low, rapid tone, with the air of one who has made up his mind to frank confidence. He had intended to keep Loring at arm's length; he had decided now to play a bolder game, and use him.

"Look here, Loring," he said, "I may as well make a clean breast of it! I have gone a bit farther than I said. You see, as I told you, my mother's most awfully generous, and I wouldn't let a hint of this get to her for the world; but a man doesn't like to feel that he's dependent on his mother for everything, don't you know—especially if he's thinking of marrying. You know what it is when one once begins to feel the money come in! I've gone on, you see—as lots of fellows do—and I've got a tidy little pile. Of course I'm very keen on making it more before—well, before I propose, don't you know!

And if you can give me a lift up I shall be eternally obliged."

He stopped, and Loring smoked for a minute or two in silence. At last he said slowly :

"I understand ! It's natural, of course. Well, I don't stand alone in the affair, to tell you the truth. There's another man to be consulted. But I'll talk the matter over with him, and if I can manage to get you in you may be sure I will. You shall have a line in a day or two, or I'll see you again." Loring dropped the end of his cigar into the ash-tray and rose.

THE OPENING OF THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE.

WHEN morning opens with the clatter and ring of cavalry, and the early rasher is left to get cold while people rush from the breakfast-table to see the white Lancers ride by—otherwise the "death and glory" boys—we may be sure that something more than common is going on. White are the plumes, peerless white the facings, everything of steel shines like silver, and as the red-and-white pennons dance along in shade and sunshine the sight raises an irresistible desire to see the Royal pageant, of which the march of the gallant Lancers is just a foretaste. The sun is shining in a truly Victorian manner—that Royal old sunshine, which you might have thought was turned on for the purpose on the great occasions of Royal ceremony, the christenings, the weddings, the inaugurations, the rejoicings of the age that is so quickly passing away, with all the well-graced actors who adorned its stage.

Everybody means to be there, that is evident, to assist at the inauguration of the Imperial Institute on this tenth of May, 1893. Yet there must be some hundreds of thousands of people who are still at work ; shops are open, banks and offices ; there are brokers and dealers still left in Capel Court, although there are more about Kensington just now. Otherwise, you would say that all the world must be making holiday, and rushing pell-mell towards the show. Omnibuses are escalated, tramcars are carried by storm, and trains that are travelling the right way are crowded to the extreme of their capacity. "We are eighteen in this carriage," says a voice in mild expostulation. But there is always room for one or two more. Young women are in the majority,

but there are plenty of veterans, too—wiry-looking grey-beards, active old ladies, the relics of the old guard, who come to salute their Queen once more. Some are carrying the full-sized tickets that admit to the building itself, but the most are only provided with the tickets of the underground railways, but mean to squeeze themselves into position somewhere.

But the swarm is universal ; the highways are almost blocked with carriages and vehicles of every description. A funeral caught in the torrent of traffic can hardly struggle through, and the white wreaths suggest the sadness of quitting a world that looks for the moment so bright and pleasant. In Kensington Gardens what a rush ! You see the crowds trooping along, taking turf and path and fence indiscriminately, while the Albert Memorial shrine seems to rise from a vast pedestal of human beings clustered about it in the form of a pyramid ; and the golden image within glows genially over the scene. For this grand new building, the dome of whose high tower shows over the tall roofs of Kensington Gore, is also in a way a memorial to the amiable Prince ; and its descent may be traced from the Exhibition of 1851, of which he was virtually the author.

From the Queen's Gate a sea of heads occupies the broad roadway, a sea that surges on each side against the line of mounted police and soldiers who keep the passage clear for the Royal procession. There are Venetian masts, and festoons, and gaily-decorated balconies to give a festive air to the scene, but the chief spectacle consists in the crowd that occupies every nook and coign of vantage, while the murmur of its myriad voices, blended with the rattle of accoutrements and the sharp word of command that runs along the line of soldiers as some great military chief passes by, form an impressive accompaniment. But eleven o'clock has sounded from all the clocks round about, and it is time to get into position. Envious are the police reserve who are picqueted all about under the shade of the trees in Kensington Gardens, stretched on the grass, lolling in chairs, or amicably pelting each other with fir-cones. "Why, they're just like real men," said a little girl who had been watching them in wonder, having evidently hitherto regarded the policeman as among the automata of the streets. A little farther on the Horse Guards' band is massed under the trees of Hyde Park, the State trumpeters in gor-

geous uniform, the State kettledrums, the silver drums the roll of which has enlivened so many State pageants. The pennons of the white lances glow against the foliage as they are clustered about the gates. Here are the gunners, Horse Artillery whose black busbies suit so well the martial, sun-browned faces of officers and men, the deadly guns all bright and shining, now harmless on the trail. And over the tallest hats and the most aspiring feminine head-gear rise the bearskins of the Guards.

Along the drive shaded by chestnut-trees still full of spiked bloom, and screened by flowering shrubs in the freshest of colour and foliage, is drawn up a line of carriages, as at a racecourse, the horses removed and the occupants disposed to enjoy the scene, with race-glasses and programmes of the show in readiness. But the drift of people still continues filling up every available crevice and cranny. They climb up the trees, occasionally dropping down like over-ripe fruit, they top all the gateways with a living frieze; they climb upon the roofs of the lodges; and they can't be expected to neglect the appeal that is offered by the red wheels of Sir John Partlet's new landau. "Would you mind not scrunching in them spokes," cries Sir John's coachman politely, but in vain. Politeness, indeed, is the order of the day, and people who find their carriages adopted as public platforms treat the invaders with sweet courtesy. "If those little boys won't mind moving for a minute"—to some shock-headed little urchins who have stormed the box-seat of a family waggonette—"my little boy will find room," cries a sweet voice belonging to the pleasant mother-familias who owns the vehicle.

Now officers are visiting their posts at a run, now the word of command is heard and soldiers present arms as the carriages of the Royal Family begin to bowl gently along towards the Institute. Wonderful State carriages and wonderful State horses, the latter proudly tossing their stately heads with manes all braided and adorned after a fashion that must be traditional in the Royal stables. To be so rarely used and yet to turn out with such completeness of detail and equipment, argues a constant state of preparation, which surely must involve frequent rehearsals. Are there morning parades of "openings of Parliaments" in the vast courts of the Royal mews, and once a week or so battalion drills of a "State inauguration"? There are Indian rajahs, too, with dark

gleaming faces under jewelled turbans. And then with a rattle of Life Guards' cuirasses comes along an open carriage and four, the sight of which fills the vast crowd with enthusiasm. It is the Prince of Wales's carriage, but for the moment nobody looks at the Prince, for all eyes are fixed upon the girlish figure, the embodiment of the hope and promise of the future—the fair Princess May.

Every woman who has a handkerchief waves it, every man and boy shouts and cheers his best. The touch of nature that makes the whole world kin, comes in here with overwhelming effect; it puts the whole popular array in a softened, tender mood. Costers, larrikins, roughs, the sempstress and the duchess, the ticket-of-leave man and the dandy stockbroker, the whole array of social orders massed upon the scene feels the same movement of emotion. She is flushed and yet pensive-looking, a little shaken with all this public manifestation, as one who, having her own tender thoughts to herself, is startled to find the great rough world outside claiming a share of them with all the rudeness of a view halloo! Who can wonder that the Princess looks a little grave and perplexed? But there is her mother, who was always "bon enfant," to scatter pleasant acknowledgements on either side, and there is her fiancé on the other side who gets his share of attention from the feminine portion of the crowd.

The procession has gone by, the cheers die away in the distance, yet still the Princess is the theme of all tongues. What did she wear—was it mauve? No, dove colour. Poor thing; ah, it must be trying. "Oh, how lovely!—wouldn't I like a try," a hundred comments like these are flying among the female crowd, while the men are letting off scraps of gossip and bits of anecdotes that show their knowledge of courts and camps. But this is L'Allegro of the performance all

Nods and becks and wreathed smiles.

Then follows silence and comparative calm, for people are waiting, and listening for the distant shouts that will announce the approach of the Queen and Empress, and now at a slow and almost mournful pace come the two chief officers of police in their sombre uniform, and then at a foot pace the Royal outrider and the Royal Horse Guards with a subdued clank and clatter. Then people rouse themselves to give a ringing cheer for the Colonials, who ride next as a guard of

honour, the Canadian Artillery with white helmets and laced jackets; and more warmly still are greeted those stalwart Australians of New South Wales, in their brown workmanlike uniforms, who sit their horses with such an easy pose and carry their lances as if so many bulrushes. The Indians, too, come in for their share of applause, splendid-looking troopers, bearing themselves with all the pride of Oriental warriors, trained in the great and little wars of our Indian empire; Bengal Lancers, swordsmen of the Poonah Horse, central Indians, and those Madras horsemen who passed from the service of Nawab to that of John Company in the stirring days of Clive or Warren Hastings. Fine figures are they from turban to saddle-bow, but rather deficient in leg power; in a football field you would expect to see those attenuated limbs snap off like so many clay pipes. Yet there is a dangerous look about those yellow eyes with the dark dilating pupils, which represses any desire to make light chaff at the expense of these warriors of the sun.

And now, surrounded by Household Troops, comes the Royal carriage, with the six cream-coloured horses moving at a walk, with State postillions in the saddle, and everything marvellously rich and complete. Most conspicuous are the two brawny Highland men in the dickie, who watch over their Royal mistress with all the devotion of their race. And the Queen—we have all come to see her, young and old, and rich and poor, some to lay up memories for the future, and perhaps in age to tell children's children, "Once I saw Queen Victoria," others to put the finishing chapter to a long story, and complete the docket that is to be put away in the vast mausoleum of memory, but all a little softened and saddened by the contrast between the bright hopes of the future and the shadowed memories of the past. So passes before us the Queen and Empress, sombre amid the magnificence that surrounds her, and sad in spite of the joyous greetings of her subjects.

When the great Queen has passed, and the last plume of the last of the rear-guard has disappeared among the trees, we all breathe more freely, we jump over the railings, we spread ourselves over the track of the Royal carriages. Some rush for a glimpse of the procession as it turns the corner. A gallant corps of Amazons comes dashing along who have watched the scene from the vantage point of the

saddle, and now if they can get round they may get another chance. But it is not easy to outflank the police. They have divided the ground into sections, and to pass from one to the other is difficult.

Now there is another thrill, as with a purring, rattling sound like nothing else in the world, the troop of Horse Artillery breaks away from its ground and wheels madly up the hill escorted by the glittering mass of Life Guards, the yellow braid and dark uniforms of the gunners, the polished guns, the shining steel, dashing through the chequered sunshine and shade, joined to the roar and rattle of the whole affair, all this gives a pleasant shiver to the imagination. But what a convoy, too, of thousands of lads and larrikins, of rough, gamins, tramps, and idlers, all drawn out from the general crowd of men, women, and children, as a magnet draws iron filings out of a sand-heap, and all pelting along with demoniac energy to see the guns fired and hear them to the best advantage. But the guns are to await the signal from the bells in the great clock tower of the Institute before they announce to the world that the ceremony of inauguration has reached its climax.

This gives opportunity for a pleasant picnic under the trees in Kensington Gardens, till repose is broken by the thunder of the guns, and so once more into the throng to be carried whither the human tide may drift us. This time we are cast ashore in a pleasant nook where there is shade and no great pressure from the crowd. Just opposite is the Volunteer Medical Ambulance, with its faded green cover, which has seen some service in mimic battles, and has taken part in many a holiday campaign. In the road over there is a smart St. John's ambulance carriage, just on the outskirts of the crowd, with a nurse on the box, and a medical attendant and all kinds of medical appliances at hand. But ours is strictly military, with soldier attendants and a staff surgeon in full uniform. As yet there is nothing to do, and our medico is chatting with the officers of the Guards, who are yawning over their naked swords and wishing they could exchange their ponderous bearskins for a straw hat. Then the Horse Artillery come back, all as smart as ever, and "their thundering guns they do supply" to be drawn peaceably up under the trees again. The warriors in blue and the warriors in scarlet exchange greetings and cheerful badinage, while the

hospital staff take a rest in their waggon. Then there arrives a mounted policeman in hot haste, the stretcher is run out, and away go the bearers to fetch in the wounded. The wounded is a little lad, very white and limp, who has tumbled out of a tree. The boy is attended to and laid out in the shade to recover his faculties. But in a few moments there is another call and the bearers bring in a young woman in a dense faint. She comes to her senses to find herself the centre of interest to a military crowd. The medical officer is feeling her pulse, the orderly is in attendance with his great can, full of all kinds of restoratives, a measured glass is placed to her lips, she drinks, and a faint colour returns to her cheeks.

It is impossible to describe the interest excited in the crowd by the last incident in the little drama. "She's a-drinking!" "What is it they give 'em — brandy? Nokes, I'm booked for a faint." "Brandy!" replies a more experienced comrade. "Not much. It's harmonia!" "Yah! not for me!" cries the other, and away they go. But there seems to be an epidemic of fainting. Now a smart young fellow in a top hat and long coat, who lies on the stretcher like a corpse, but who presently tries to struggle to his feet, and who seems rather indignant at the sympathetic treatment he receives. Fainted young women are brought up one after another with a military promptitude and sang-froid at which the foolish laugh, and even cheer a little at each new arrival. Certainly, as a veteran remarks, there were not so many faints in the earlier days of Victoria's reign when we had long days, and trying ceremonies, under a sunshine even hotter than this, and when nobody thought of ambulances. Anyhow, there is soon a row of pale, bewildered-looking young women, sitting on the steps of the ambulance, under the sympathetic gaze of cavalry, and Guardsmen, and Horse Artillery, while smart young medical assistants dispense restoratives from small glass bottles. For poor little Miss Smith, who was working late last night at the modiste's to earn her holiday, and who started early without much breakfast this morning, and has had nothing to eat since — to come to her senses in this cool shade, surrounded by guardian angels in uniform, must be like a glimpse of Elysium.

But again it is fall in and present arms, the Royal procession is returning in the

same order as it went, fresh relays of handkerchiefs are waved for Princess May, fresh relays of throats shout themselves hoarse, fresh forests of hats are waving in the air. And now the Royal party are no exception to the general aspect of cheerfulness and content. It is all over, the reading of addresses, the bowing, and posing, and everybody is really happy and glad. The Guards form up, and march away with the tow-row-row of the "British Grenadiers," and the skirl of the Fusiliers' pipes, and the great British public marches after ten abreast, and in a column that will stretch for a mile. There is a general assembly all over the park and gardens, and over the steps of the Albert Memorial, and all along to where the huge stands about the building itself are emptying quickly of their thousands of occupants, while the great gateway of the Institute disgorges its mass of guests, their hands encumbered with pamphlets and papers that they drop liberally in all directions as they seek their carriages in vain. Now is the chance of the nigger minstrel, of the street performer. Bands of them form circles opposite the great houses, and the happy young folk in the balconies shower down largesse, chiefly for the fun of the scramble, and the comic eagerness of the performers to get their share. Long lines of carriages pass slowly through the crowded mass, and the regular traffic of the streets long interrupted, pours on in a constantly increasing stream. Now it is a chancellor, or chief justice in a great wig and ermine robes, and almost into the back of his carriage is a coster's cart loaded high with old fruit boxes, on the top of which sits 'Arry himself, glorying in the chance of directing a little playful chaff upon his distinguished associate. Or it is a sheriff's gilded coach followed by a big yellow omnibus; the countess's fine carriage, with the beautiful daughters arrayed in wonderful costumes, runs alongside the donkey-barrow loaded with greens, and a huge furniture van follows that threatens to overwhelm them both.

With all this, the sombre appearance of an English crowd is relieved by hundreds of gay dresses, by uniforms, by Court suits and cocked hats, by swords and scarves and jingling sabretaches. It is something gayer, brighter, happier than one could have expected to meet with in life's dull stream. Fogs and dull days, financial disaster, gloomy aspects of trade, all are forgotten in the general satisfaction

and goodwill. Policemen, soldiers, crowd, all laugh and chaff happily together. Here is one, anyhow, radiant with pleasure as he steps along with his sweetheart Harriet, whose hat rivals the best with its sweeping brim and tall ostrich feather, "Well, I niver did see sich a lot o' nobbs in all mai life!" is 'Arry's seal of approval to all the proceedings of the day. And above all the cohue of the crowd float the melodious notes of the bells in the great tower, three hundred feet above the level of the pavement. Chimes that pour down upon you from here and there, as light flaws of wind may blow, or as the huge blocks of buildings may modify, the sounds, and these chimes seem to be just what was wanted to enliven the somewhat sombre grandeur of this quarter of museums and institutes. It has been a little dead hitherto, like some, it is to be hoped, beneficent giant well provided with limbs and with organs admirably arranged, but into whom no miracle has blown the breath of life. And to the ear of faith it seemed as if those joyous chimes announced that just such a miracle had been wrought, and that this bright day might be expected to inaugurate a more vivid circulation of ideas and sentiments between this great heart of London and every distant vein and artery of the mighty empire.

THE DANCING CHILDREN OF HARRICOMBE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

"No fear!"

This boyish cry was made by a small, trim maiden lady of fifty, who was being shown over a domain new to her, but the "ancestral" home of the group of young people leading her.

The personal antecedents of this Miss Yearsley have naught to do with our story. During the last summer she had been unearthed by an old schoolfellow who had married Mr. Hare, of Harricombe, had become the mistress of the Manor, and the mother of a goodly company of young Hares.

But these young folks were by no means the "Dancing Children of Harricombe." The story of these last had just been told, and the end of it had been given in this way by Yorick Hare, a boy of twelve:

"We beat every house about here, Aunt

Paule." Miss Yearsley rejoiced in the name of Paulina, and she accepted the title of aunt in an honorary way from this family. "We have not only 'a' ghost but crowds of ghosts! You shall see them one day!"

"No fear!" had been her answer. Miss Yearsley might have been an American lady, so fashionably was she dressed, so grey and fluffy was her hair, so keen and cute was her glance.

"They'll bring you your fate, Aunt Paule," Beatrice Hare cried. She was eighteen, had just left school, and was going to be "out," much to the chagrin of her wild self.

The party were by this time at the end of the old garden, and where the green combe slipped down from the high level of the Manor grounds to the shining green sea—what sea so green in the winter sunlight as the sea of South Devon? Gorgeous colouring was below and all around from the flashes of autumnal fire through brown and heather of the moorlands. Berries of all hues, berries purple, black, yellow, scarlet, and crimson, patched the greenery of the combe, full-leaved still, though Christmas was nigh at hand, for you know airs are soft and kindly in Devon, and mother Nature when she made these rifts in the red-earthed cliffs made them where greater heights than themselves tower above and shadow them.

May, the elder sister, who was being dragged along by Bee, gave one word as an ejaculation upon Bee's suggestion.

"Absurd!"

Being twenty and the eldest, being also engaged to her cousin, Harold Hare, in India, she surely had a right to be more wise and grave than Bee was. Some people called her "brusque"—she was most certainly sterling and true.

"Right, May—right!" Miss Yearsley applauded common sense. "But give me the history and explanation of your hundreds of ghosts," she went on. "If you can, that is."

"I do not know when they began, Aunt Paule," the girl answered; "I suppose in the dark ages of the Hare sovereignty. I only hope our Hare forbears had not killed a lot of children, the children of a rival tribe—but all round the country you may hear of the 'Children of Harricombe.' They are proper ghosts—you cannot get them when you want them, and you cannot drive them away."

"You speak feelingly." The little lady's keen glance questioned the girl.

"Of course I do." May coloured under her warm, brown skin. "Harold and I saw them together, and at first we both thought they were village children coming up the combe. Harold had not proposed then. Of course he would have done so just the same, but it made me awfully hot. I could not help it, and I could not help seeing—they danced and they sang. Yes! you needn't jeer, you boys; I heard them sing and so did Harold."

"I have not yet got the thread of the mystery. Why should they not dance and sing? Better far than wailing ghosts, or ghosts with rattling chains."

"We are not so commonplace with our ghosts, dear things! Come down easily, Aunt Paule," Bee cried, holding out her firm, young hand for the elder lady to descend round a muddy bend of the combe. "Shouldn't you like to have seen Harold and May blushing one against the other, and 'the Children' not caring one bit?"

"You are talking Greek."

"Then here's plain English. These ghosts of ours dance when they bring you good luck, and weep, and wail, and howl, and wring their hands like any other ghost when they bring you bad luck. I've never seen them and I am out in the combe at all hours. Never mind, I've got the good luck without them," and the girl danced on ahead.

"Well, never mind the children now. Help me down this place, Bee, and, you boys, hold the blackberry tangle out of my eyes. Was there ever such mud?"

"The soft Devon air, and the deep Devon combes—that's the way the guide-books have it. You like east-windy London streets and dry pavements, do you not, Aunt Paule? Now, your foot here on this stone, clutch the bough and swing on to that long stone there," Bee advised from a firm standpoint in the very heart of a gorse-bush. "Give me your hand and clutch the bough with your other. All right. Why, you spring better than I do!"

"And why not?"

Bee pursed up her pretty mouth, lifted her eyebrows, puckered her forehead, and did her best to keep from laughing too openly. No answer came from May up above. May had her skirts well up, and whereas she could have run and sprung down the combe like a young goat, was

like a steed well in hand, stepping daintily and cleanly on rock and patch of greenery. No help did she need, erect was she as a young huntress behind the quick, half-nervous springs of Aunt Paule.

"Hurry up, girls," came from the boys below.

"All right!" and Bee's clear voice rang down through the tree-trunks and the bracken and the gorse. The shout rang like a bell to the ears of men on the sea.

"There's a jolly sight here—look sharp!" Bee forgot Aunt Paule's needs and flew. Her old blue serge dress gained a few new alits and scratches, but like a boy she pushed through briar and brake to the pebbly shore. There she stood with her hands on her hips, and with the dazzle of the December sun streaming over her and goldening her hair. The wind came from off the sea, a soft, strong south wind, and it lifted skirts and short curly hair just as far as they would go, which was not far. The glow of roses was on her rounded cheeks, and a dropped white feather she had picked up was stuck in the rakish little cloth cap she wore; she was trim and untidy at the same moment.

"What a love!" she cried. "Whose is she, Malc? When did she come? What's her name?"

A white-sailed yacht was lying to just within the entrance of Harricombe Bay, on to which the green combe opened, and at the moment when Bee's questions ceased a boat shot out from the far side of the dainty vessel. Swift, sure strokes sped the boat through the shining, green water, and then as May and Miss Yearsley came down the last slope of the combe, the crunch of the keel was heard on the shingle of the beach.

"The 'Iris'—by Jove!" Malcolm cried with a grand air, as if the "Iris" were a personage, and he knew all about her.

"Well? What about her?" Bee asked, with the superlative air sisters so nicely assume towards their very grand younger brothers.

"Simply that she is Hatherley's new yacht."

"Old Hatherley's—oh!" Interest was dead.

"Old Hatherley is a proper enough old chap," sturdily.

"Candles!"

Bee's aristocratic nose sniffed the air.

"Well, and why not? Your men can

"make candles, and you yourself can go in for—what you like. I've no patience with girl's bosh! Old Hatherley is the most learned man in the county."

"Greek and Latin—that's why you like him. I'm ignorant, as you know, Malc."

"And he has the finest yacht on the coast—look at her! Don't you pretend you've never heard of the 'Iris,' or you'll be out of it."

"How vulgar! 'Out of it'! Out of what—the 'Iris'? I'm thinking I'd rather like to be in her," and Bee moved a yard or so further along the beach, as if that advance would give her eyes more searching power over the beautiful craft.

A hundred yards to the west, the crew of the row-boat were standing and looking to right and left. Was it that they did not know the coast?

One detached himself from the rest.

"I was never here before," the young man said. He looked a sailor, and his speech had a ring and lilt of the north; of the north, too, were his blue eyes and yellow hair. "And I'll want the shortest cut to Scarbourne Court. It lies off here?"

"Yes. Hatherley's?"

"Hatherley is my uncle. I've been with him up and down the North Seas."

"Yes; he's been cruising somewhere; we heard that." Yorick Hare was spokesman.

"It is so. Not having enough of the sea I have been cruising with him—landed him at Leith a week ago, and have brought the 'Iris' round here."

"She's a crack yacht—a prize-winner? All sorts, eh?" Yorick put in.

"She is, my man. Would you like to look at her? I'll take you if you'll meet me here some time."

The boy's eyes sparkled.

"Not now; Scarbourne Court now, please. There'll be a way up? Short and sharp, you know."

Open blue eyes looked as if their owner's path to most things would be short and sharp.

"The coastguard steps are just beyond where you landed; the combe is here—either will do. Scarbourne is just between the two; the combe is our beat. We are Hares," the boy added.

"It is very kind," and the stranger lifted his blue cap. "I'll just take the combe, as I'll be the nearer to it now."

He signalled an order to the sailors, while he himself sprang up the combe.

Two days after this Edgar Graham was to be seen as much at Harricombe Manor as at his uncle's place at Scarbourne. Some friendships do grow quickly.

As for Miss Yearsley, she openly declared for this young man. She was the mother's crony, and mothers and their cronies are known to have much talk over the ways, and the doings, and the possibilities of the rising generation, and about the criticism there lurked a touch or so of prophecy—women, specially old maids, foresee so much.

Of course there came to be a cruise in the lovely "Iris."

No December sunshine can be imagined brighter than that which shone upon the yacht and her party when "old Hatherley" took his friends across to Torbay.

Was there ever such a lunch as he gave? Was there ever so trim a yacht as the flying "Iris"?

Also—was there ever such a drawback as the white sea fog which came spirit-like and silent as they were sailing gaily past Torquay homewards?

"It's more from land than sea," some one said.

"I hate a fog!" Aunt Paule exclaimed.

The "Iris" gave a wide berth to the sandy mouth of Exe, shot past Exmouth, whose red cliffs, gorse clothed, were a trifle filmy under the scudding, hurrying white mist, past Budleigh—yes, surely past Budleigh, but the fog had taken a short cut over the hills and was ahead and thick. Nigh upon Sidmouth—eh! well! one could not see. What of Harricombe Bay? It was awkward, but no one could say where the bay was!

The master said the "Iris" must "lie to" for a bit; "these fogs never last long."

The fun was out of the day.

The elder folks were in the saloon—not too warm. The young ones with coat-collars over their ears, and the girls rolled in thick shawls, were on deck, restless, keeping close to one another, some of them trying to make jokes and succeeding ill.

"What is that noise?" Bee asked suddenly.

There were but low voices talking, and the soft lap of peaceful sea against the sides of the yacht.

"Like singing, will ye mean?—no! like some child crying!" Graham said. He was by Bee, as he had been all day, as he generally was now, in fact.

"There must be some boat in distress—some little boat, perhaps, with children in. What can we do?"

"What are you talking about?" May asked, who was not far off.

They told her.

"Sea-birds," listening. "But—I don't hear them. They have flown away."

"No," was Graham's sure reply. "It is not sharp enough. It's human. And—hark, Bee—hark!"

And under the mist why should he not take the girl's hand? He was a brave, helpful man; and Bee—well, Bee was Bee, the one woman in the world for him, and the touch of her hand was help.

It was no time for second thoughts of squeamish proprieties. Her warm, strong, young fingers gave answer as her tongue spoke.

"Yes," she said, listening. "They are crying. Oh! they have some terrible sorrow. Is any one drowned, do you think? Is it a boat drifting? Tell them to be careful. Can't we anchor? We shall run them down!"

"Shout!" Graham said, "shout!" His strong voice cried high and loud through the fog. "Don't fear, we'll help—shout, and we'll get to you."

Only the low, soft crying for answer; and it seemed to these two, Bee and Graham, as if the sobs were quite near.

"Keep off!" shouted Graham.

"We shall run them down!" Bee gasped; and she clutched at the young man's arm.

"A boat must be lowered."

"You'll not go?"

"Bee—my love—not go?" And quickly Graham gave his order.

Nobody had heard the cry of distress but these two. May and the other young ones ridiculed the idea; they had been near by, and should know. The crew, too, stuck to the same.

"It'll be some echo in the shore; there'll be caves belike. And mebbe we're nearer coast than we knows of."

"Lower the boat!" came the order.

No sooner was this done, however, than the December sun mastered the mist, warmed it, lightened it, and took to himself shape as a scarlet ball of fire on the shoulder of a low, western hill. Away on the very edge of the wide world did this globe of fire seem to be, but from it came life and heat to sweep the evil mist from off the face of the waters.

Again the green sea danced and played round the sides of the "Iris."

Graham and one sailor in their white boat rocked and danced in the surf of the coast; but they were alone; no other boat was to be seen, no drowning man struggled, no children wailed, no sign of distress showed.

No; sunshine and silence—nothing else was there, round the white yacht and on the sweep of green Harricombe Bay.

"It was a most extraordinary thing," Bee was saying. By some means she and the young sailor were ahead of the rest, and with light, swift steps were mounting the combe and taking short cuts amongst the tangle. "No one will ever convince me I did not hear."

"I say the same."

"Well, you look out for news. Tomorrow, perhaps to-night, you'll hear some boat is lost. We could not have swamped a boat without knowing, could we?"

"No—no. Can you not trust me?"

"I don't know!" and Bee sprang forward, tossing her head.

Suddenly she stopped and she held out her hand, her face was grave and white, and her attitude was of one who listens.

"Do you not hear?" and with her outstretched hand she touched Graham, leading him forward. "They have hidden somewhere here," she said in a hushed voice; "some one surely is hurt!"

"Ha!—yes!—strange! but why did they not answer when I called?"

For he also heard then as she did the sound of a low sobbing, and as he held her guiding hand he, also like her, saw two children, half hidden by intervening bushes, pass along, crying.

The mist was gathering again, so that everything was filmy once more—filmy were the children and the green, leafy combe, the near bushes, and the far rounded hills and moors.

The two sought, and called, and followed, but they never reached those filmy, wailing children.

"They are our 'Children of Harricombe'!" Bee at last cried excitedly. "Our ghosts! Did you not know how famous we were in the matter of ghosts?"

"No; tell me."

Then she did tell him, and out of one story there grew another which was told by him, and was just the sweet old story which is always new though of so hoary and blessed an antiquity.

Together in the gloaming the two walked hand-in-hand from the combe through the winter garden home.

"Oh, I do not fear at all!" she said.

"Nay, my dearest! Are we not strong and living? Surely we can master the misty tears and crying of those little ghosts of yours!"

"I should think so, indeed!"

It was a merry Christmas at Harricombe that year, for Beatrice Hare was "woo'd and married and a'" in no time.

Graham was heir to old Hatherley, of Scarbourne, and after one more voyage would settle down as young Squire. But so going on his last voyage he would have his "wife" and not only his "betrothed" to think of and to pray for him.

So the marriage was quick.

The sweet breath of coming spring had touched the green combe and whispered to the sleeping violets and awaked them. Soft blue flowery eyes looked up into the clear February sky, feared not, and breathed their perfumed song of silence.

Daisy Hare, the little sister, found the first violet, and carried it over to Bee at Scarbourne.

"Father says you should have a letter from Edgar to-morrow," she said; "the mail is due to-night."

"I know," Bee answered. Bee was so glad that she felt tearful.

"Aunt Paule is going the day after to-morrow; this time she means it, I believe, because her big box is packed. Mother says 'come to tea to-day'; she knows old—I beg your pardon—Mr. Hatherley has to be in Exeter to-morrow."

"Couldn't I come alone?"

"Of course, but—he's fun. He fights so with Aunt Paule. How they hate each other!" the child said.

"Do they?" dreamily.

"How you do dream, Bee! I wish Edgar would come back. The letter to-morrow will say when he'll be here, won't it?"

"Yes."

As usual there had been a war of words between "old Hatherley" and Miss Yearley, and the alert little lady had moved off to the window of the morning-room. There she stood watching the glories of the setting sun athwart the trellis of wintry tree boughs. The park shone golden in the yellow light, crimson and scarlet bars as of fire swept the purpling sky.

"Well, I never!" the lady cried.

She was a quaint figure of alertness with

her hands crossed behind her, her shoulders well thrown back, and her tilted nose well in the air.

Mr. Hatherley, on the hearthrug warming his calves, looked at her. His grey eyes laughed.

"Is it anything worth coming to that draughty window to see?" he asked.

"No—but you Devonians are madder than I thought you."

"How so? I always say we are mild and sane."

"Look there!" and Aunt Paule pointed, and her face was a picture of scorn. "A school treat on a February day!"

"Stuff, Aunt Paule," May said, but like the rest she went towards the window.

"Fiddle——," so began "old Hatherley." But he suddenly stopped. "It looks like it," he said in a nonplussed sort of way. "They are not Scarbourneites, though—I'd have had my say there."

"Well, they are enjoying themselves. Dancing, actually! Mary," to Mrs. Hare, "where are you giving them their feed?"

"Aunt Paule!" shouted Yorick, clapping his hands, "you've seen the 'dancing children.' Hooray! And you'd never believe!"

"Neither do I believe now."

She turned from the window abruptly and took a cup of tea from the hands of the Squire without the least sign of thanks.

Again only two people had seen the "children."

On the following morning Bee's maid at Scarbourne took her mistress a cup of tea before getting up, at the same time carrying her a letter with the Singapore post mark. Bee was sitting up in bed wide-eyed and terrified.

"Oh, Davis!" she cried, "why did you not come when I called you in the night?"

The woman had heard nothing.

"Such a terrific dream! Hold me! hold me, Davis! Am I really awake?"

"Oh! ma'am—yes. And it's the loveliest morning! What was it, ma'am?"

"Dreadful! dreadful!—I cannot say. He is dead, he is dead, I am sure! They murdered him." Was Bee wandering?

"Oh, Davis—say it is only a dream! And I went to sleep again—yes, I know I did, and I have dreamt it all over again, and you woke me. Am I in my senses—am I?"

"Sure, yes, my dearie. Drink some tea and read the letter. There's a letter from

the young Squire, ma'am, and you'll see truly how he's well an' 'earty."

After a bit the good soul—she had been the old nurse at the Hares'—left her young mistress quiet, but strangely tired-looking and pale.

"Miss Bee to be like that!" the woman said to herself. "I'd never ha' believed it if I hadn't seen it. I'll be glad when the master's back. Let her lie; the old Squire must have his breakfast alone—he's done it afore."

An hour later she went upstairs again. No sound.

Bee was still and quiet, and the opening door disturbed her not.

Davis listened. What a good sleep—a sleep now with good dreams surely, for her waking thoughts had been gladdened by the Singapore letter. The letter was in Bee's hand still, though the white fingers were loosened by sleep.

White fingers! Nurse Davis sprang forward, for Bee's fingers were not white, but brown, and tanned, and rosy.

The sweetest, smiling sleep! But Bee was no longer in that pretty bride's room. She was hand-in-hand with her husband in the far-away country, from whence there will be no voyaging.

The letter was forwarded by a Singapore friend to whom Graham had trusted the posting in case he should not be back from some small outlying duty. The friend had pencilled on the envelope:

"G. unexpectedly delayed."

That same morning a telegram to Mr. Hatherley told him what Bee's dream had told to her.

Graham was dead.

There had been some landing on a small island for water; natives had attacked the party, and had killed two men and the officer in command.

The officer was Lieutenant Edgar Graham.

There is nothing more to say except a few words which thicken the mystery about the "Children of Harricombe."

Mr. Hatherley, the bachelor Squire, was utterly broken down by the loss of his children. Like a helpless, hunted creature he fled always to Harricombe Manor.

"I am weary of living, and there's the truth!" one day he ejaculated tremulously, sinking down into an easy-chair.

"Fiddlesticks!" Aunt Paule cried in answer.

It was another winter, but with the season she was back at the Manor, and as alert and masterful as ever.

"Rouse yourself, Squire!" she added.

"I cannot, simply cannot," and his limp hands played with the arms of the easy-chair.

"If I only could have you under my control for a week!"

Her words were uttered without a secondary meaning, but some electric force in them flashed a meaning into the poor old Squire's brain.

He both spoke and acted.

And Aunt Paule became Squires of Scarbourne in a very few weeks, and both the prophecies of the "Children of Harricombe"—that of joy as well as that of sorrow—were fulfilled for the only people to whom they had been revealed.

A WET DAY AMONG THE BIRDS.

GRUMBLERS have a very strong objection to a rainy day in the merry month of May, but our hearts are light one soaking morning in this festive month as we start for a ramble on the Northumberland moors.

On such a day in the City we should have donned our mackintoshes and unfurled our umbrellas, and grumbled if the water found its way through our boots. But in the moorland what are coats and umbrellas? Superfluity—as Kingsley says of sheets and servants; and only bothering superfluity too, if you are going to be out all day. So trust to luck for the sun to come out, and if it does not—well, it need not damp our spirits if it does our clothes.

It does rain this morning—rains as it well knows how to in the North; but Nature seems all the better for it, so why should not we be too? The soft turf squelches under our feet, as we get higher and higher, and the bonnie rough cattle gaze at us in wonder, as if surprised to see those curious creatures, men, as little afraid of weather as they are themselves.

The rooks are out on the slopes dining sumptuously on the drowned-out larvæ; the old birds every now and then presenting a choice morsel to the awkward youngsters, who are quite old enough to look after themselves—but who don't object to a little attention from mother still.

What crowds of rooks there are; rooks and woodpigeons galore! Every copse in the valley has its rookery, and every fir plantation on the hills is crowded with ringdoves' nests. Away on the left an old carrion crow is making some guttural remarks that don't sound very complimentary; perhaps the keeper has sent a charge of small shot through her nest into her fat and hungry babies.

Till we leave the hedges we are in a perfect nursery of chaffinches, thrushes, and blackbirds; and sedge-warblers scold at us from every pool we pass. At last we are clear of cultivation, stone walls taking the place of hedges, and titlarks and wheatears of whitethroats and chaffinches.

What a beautiful bird the wheatear is, as he bows and curtsies to us from the top of the wall, flitting ten yards further, and turning again with a chuckle as he congratulates himself that he has successfully led us away from his more sombre mate, who is comfortably sitting somewhere among the loose stones! He knows the white band on his back will catch the eye, and he keeps flying a few yards in advance of us, till he thinks we are at a respectable distance; then off he goes, to return by a long circuit to tell his mate of the danger past.

What was that long chirruping whistle far away beyond us? Out with the glass. There it is—the wary curlew singing his bridal song. How different from the wild cry of the bird when he leaves his moorland home for the longshore and mudflats! Shall we go to look for the nest? Little use; the cock is off already with his warning cry of alarm, shortly to be followed by his mate, who has run for some distance before rising so as not to betray the locality of her mottled eggs. There it is again, this time almost overhead; he has seen us, and swerves as if he were within gunshot.

Most birds are more trustful when they have eggs or young, but the curlew, shy at the best of times, is ten times shyer now. Very different is the behaviour of the golden plover, as we lie on the moist heather somewhere near their nest.

Both birds try to lead us away, running here and there among the tussocks with short, shrill whistles, or flying quickly round us with louder cries. But when they see we mean to stop they grow bolder, and sometimes venture almost within arm's reach, showing their beautiful mottled plumage and black bellies to perfection. Now we appreciate the beauties of the living bird in its native wilds, when

we compare it with our remembrance of the miserable mummies we have seen in even the best collections.

We try to find the nest, and several times do our best to conceal ourselves, but to no purpose; as long as we are on the moor, our friends the "whistlers" are not going to lose sight of us or return to their family. The lapwings have evidently got some downy youngsters amongst the grass in the hollow; they wheel round us calling "pee-wheet" with the most distressing accents of anxiety. One has settled on a little hummock, and stands there elevating and depressing his long crest in his perplexity; then goes tumbling along with one wing trailing on the ground as if he had been shot. We don't want to waste time, my good fellow, looking for your little balls of marbled down with their bright eyes and shaky little legs; we have watched them often enough, and would not hurt them for the world, so go back and tell them they need not crouch trembling in the grass any longer.

We are passing up a noisy little stream now, which comes rushing and tumbling from the marshy flats above. A sandpiper flies quickly past us, floating along for some distance with its wings in a perfect bow, the white bars gleaming in the sun, which has managed to struggle out for a brief period.

At last we are over the watershed, and down below us we catch a glimpse of the sheen of water in a thick plantation. Down we go, heeding little round us, for assuredly that looks a grand spot for fowl.

Quietly now, we are close to the wall. The place is evidently preserved, but there is no need of notices on this side the wood, and very little on the other either; for there is no one here who would care to trespass except poachers, and notices are not much use to deter them. The gate is not even locked, so in we go, and get into the drip of the soaking trees, for the rain is falling again harder than ever. Down a grass drive we quietly walk, keeping behind the bushes that grow by the side of the pool. Above us in the tall trees are big nests that suggest great possibilities, hawks, carrions, owls; in the lower branches the untidy platforms of the wood-pigeons. We won't disturb them, for the noisy clatter of their stiff feathers would startle all the fowl on the pond. Esconcing ourselves behind a rhododendron bush, we get out the field-glasses and examine the water.

What a lovely sight for a city ornithologist. Out of the reeds at the edge several water-hens are swimming, looking round with startled glances, disturbed by the slight rustle we have made. Further out the great black coots are floating about, pruning their feathers, chasing each other about in playful gambols, or engaged in maternal duties with their fluffy little youngsters.

Several little islets, covered with birches and thick undergrowth, look perfect paradises for the oologist. Up with a whisk spring several mallards from the bulrushes, and many others are on the water. A water-hen rushes from her nest almost at our feet, with a terrified splutter, striking the water with her long, ungainly toes as she leaves her unprotected eggs within our reach, if we wanted them.

Whatever is that on the far side of the pool? Is it a man standing silently there? No, that pair of tufted ducks would not swim within a few yards of him, if it were. If we were in Australia we should put it down as a big grey apteryx. What can it be? Why, it's only a gaunt old heron, looking intently into the water at its feet, patience on a monument of long, thin legs. His fishing does not seem very profitable, for he hardly moves all the time we are watching him.

"Clack, clack, clack!" and three of the metallic-voiced coots hurl themselves upon each other, splashing and fighting in the water with beaks, wings, and feet. Are they disputing about their wives, who hardly trouble themselves to glance at their quarrelsome husbands, so occupied are they with their little charges? One of the gladiators swims rapidly away, doubling and diving, and the other two at once join forces and chase him with upstretched wings and outstretched necks; but he is too quick for them, and peace reigns once again.

With a series of sharp whistles, two sandpipers fly past, almost touching the water, and fall to courting on a little stretch of gravel.

There are certainly five pairs of tufted ducks on the water, beautiful little creatures they are. Watch that little dandy making his toilet, first turning on one side, his black back towards us, then on the other, displaying the full expanse of his clean white side, stretching out his wings, scraping them with his feet, and standing up in the water to give himself a final shake by flapping his wings vigorously.

The drakes seem to take special pleasure in showing how much white they possess. Here you may breed in peace, little tufted ducks; here you may establish yourselves once more as residents. You were nearly driven away some years ago, but the Wild Birds' Protection Act has helped you, and may it help you for many years to come.

All the while the air is full of swallows and sand-martins, flying low as the insects keep down in the damp weather; and big black swifts are screaming overhead.

But we cannot stop here all day, the rain has long since struck through, and if one stands long in damp clothes, a chill comes over one's ardour in spite of tufted ducks. So let us leave them, and the mallards, the coots, and water-hen, and apteryx—I beg his pardon—heron, in peace; and let us hope that the last-named gentleman may soon catch some nice little warm-blooded shrews to warm his vitals, and prevent him from being laid up with rheumatism.

Leaving the pool the wood gets thicker, and we see more inviting nests, but the trees look lush, and there are a certain class of gentry who wear velveteens, whom it is decidedly awkward to interview from the top of a tree in a preserved covert. Here is the high-road at last, and on the other side a smaller pond. Hullo! a study in black and white, two more pairs of tufted ducks and three or four black-headed gulls. "Askew's Hens," as they are called hereabouts, abound everywhere, breeding in any suitable localities where either seclusion or the kindly help of man gives them protection. Mr. Askew's pond at Pallinsburn is not many miles away, and his beautiful black-headed fowl range for miles round during the breeding season.

How enchanting these little gulls look, bringing almost a waft of sea air, as they float about these inland pools, or patiently follow the plough or harrow to pick up anything tasty that is exposed!

Whatever is that big nest in the small fir-tree by the pond? It looks like a well-made wood pigeon's, but we cannot see through it. Well, it is only nine or ten feet from the ground, so up we go, frightening off an old water-hen, who flops into the pond in great alarm. Who would have expected it? She has placed a lining of sedges on an old pigeon's nest, and on these laid her pretty speckled eggs. How she must literally look down upon her relations from her aerial perch! There is

no accounting for what a water-hen will do; people with big feet are always eccentric. But look at this a few yards away—hanging underneath this spruce bough—the lovely little residence of a gold-crest with nine tiny eggs no bigger than peas. How neatly it hangs—sheltered from the searching rain by the leaves above, and how cosy the little eggs are in the warm couch of feathers and down!

Here a poor little greenfinch has deserted her nest, probably in one of the late frosts, for the eggs, though incubated, are cold and dead, and the nest is damp and dilapidated. But we must be pushing on, for it is getting late, and we have a train to catch. But stop; we cannot hurry past without watching that dipper a little on the pebbly river, as she skims quickly across to yonder moss-covered stone, and then drops lightly into the water, to run along the bottom searching for caddis worms. Here comes her mate, alighting on a big ripple-washed stone, and giving us such a pretty, jerky little bow; and then a rush of thrilling song, as impetuous as all his movements. Is that big, round mass of moss their nest? No, it is only a stone. But look well under the roots of this hollow tree. Oh, what a to-do! As if we wanted to find your nest, you silly starling, coming flying up like that, and then turning sharply with a most unearthly yell! You've got babies, have you? Well, if you want to protect them from the small boys of the neighbourhood, tell them to make a little less noise when they hear your voice, and not to poke their great ugly mouths out of the hole directly they think you are coming.

There are no dippers in these roots—only a plucky little wren, who allows herself to be taken off the nest, and when released, promptly falls into the stream, and climbs up the bank, looking for something to eat in the most innocent way, as if she didn't know anything about eggs or youngsters.

No, we are not going to stop to bother you, you silly sandpipers, so you need not try to lead us further up the stream, though you are showing your clean, white breasts, and jerking that ridiculous little stump you call a tail! Whistle and sing away, you bonnie birds of the stream! We would fain lie on the wet grass and watch you, but time and discretion bid otherwise, and we must get back to the haunts of men.

When we are once again at work in

the busy, smoky manufacturing town, and the pitiless rain comes down on the slimy flags—and men must work, spite of rain and discomfort—we will look back with pleasure on one of the happy, wet days we spent in the dear old North country, and try not to grumble at our lot.

“OUTLAWED.”

A SHORT SERIAL.

CHAPTER XII.

It was the only conversation of such a kind that passed between them. But from that afternoon, though they returned apparently to the old relations, and less personal topics, in reality they stood in a new attitude towards each other.

A certain cold reserve which had tinged Wilfred Egerton's manner to her, on their first acquaintance, gave place to a gentler courtesy. The caressing softness in his looks and tones deepened, until she began to recognise it.

“Lor, miss! what pretty eyes you have to be sure!” exclaimed Mrs. Page one afternoon, as she met Hope returning from a visit to the secret chamber. They met in one of the corridors upstairs. Mrs. Page was just coming away from Mr. Egerton's room, and she stopped to give Hope the last news of him. “They shine just like stars!” looking admiringly into the pretty face.

Hope blushed and laughed.

“You mustn't pay such outrageous compliments,” she said. “They are ever so much more flattering when they are put more delicately.”

Then the smiling face grew grave. Mrs. Page had given her no good account of Mr. Egerton.

“Is Mrs. Egerton with him now?” she asked.

“No, miss, she is tired out, and Mr. Gilbert has made her go and lie down for a bit. After all, it isn't as if any one could do any good, and the nurses like to have the room best to themselves.”

“Mr. Wilfred told me to say that she was on no account to trouble to come and see him this afternoon, if she were tired,” Hope said, the pink in her cheeks faintly deepening again. “I suppose there is no news to give him yet?” more eagerly.

“No; Mr. Gilbert has said nothing,” a little reluctantly. Gilbert Egerton had

left home the previous day, and had only returned this afternoon. "But he seemed a good deal put about when he heard that Fanny," one of the housemaids, "had told that niece of Eason's that you had changed your ball-dress that night. I caught the stupid, lazy thing gossiping in the kitchen garden with Eason's niece just before luncheon, as if it were any business of hers. I don't suppose it matters really much; it mayn't go any farther. But it is a comfort, miss, that your maid is still away. It is just as well that Mr. Wilfred should be safe off before she gets back."

Hope had got rid of the ball-dress; but there was always the chance of the maid enquiring for it on her return.

Hope caught her breath.

"Mrs. Page, don't you think that that man has given up the search by this time?" she asked.

Something in the pale earnestness of the questioning face gave the good house-keeper a painful shock. The sunny light had died out of the pretty eyes.

"I don't know, miss," she said awkwardly, after an imperceptible pause. "But Mr. Gilbert seems to think not. He says he never gives up anything. And I shall be thankful enough when Mr. Wilfred is well out of the place. Heaven knows, for more reasons than one," she added to herself, as she looked after the graceful, girlish figure as it passed on, the lightness gone from its step, down the corridor.

For the first time in her life her honest soul rose up in rebellion against the family she had served so faithfully.

"It's not fair! There's no call to sacrifice her, sweet young thing, and that simple as she is. Mistress shouldn't allow it, knowing what a one Master Wilfred is for a pretty face. But not even he could be that wicked, seeing what her father has done for him, to say nothing of what she has done herself, dear, brave little lady!"

But Mrs. Page could not free her mind entirely from the suspicion that haunted it.

Gilbert Egerton had left home in the hope of being able to make some of the arrangements for his brother's escape. But the friend to whom he had determined to appeal to aid him had started unexpectedly for the Continent, and would be absent for a day or so. Until he returned to England nothing could be done.

Gilbert Egerton, in the meantime, came back to Meadowlands.

He almost felt that it would be a relief if the police gave some sign. It was this feeling of an invisible but ever-watchful foe which harassed them so terribly.

Between his attendance on his father and all the other duties that devolved on him, now that Mr. Egerton could no longer see after any of the daily business of a man in his position, Gilbert kept a ceaseless guard against a possible surprise.

None of those concerned in the secret of Wilfred Egerton's hiding-place would ever forget that fortnight to the end of their days.

In spite of the change in much of the routine of daily life necessitated by a dangerous illness in the house, there were still many of the duties of ordinary existence to be carried out. They were compelled to act as they would have acted had the dread of illness alone shadowed the house, and there had been no other anxiety and effort to conceal the fugitive from justice. Intimate friends called, and had to be seen; while there was always a constant stream of enquirers from among their ordinary acquaintance; for Mr. Egerton was much respected and liked through the county.

Meals were served with the usual stately luxury, and they were compelled as they sat down to them to keep a strict guard over every word they uttered before the servants. Indeed, to baffle any discovery on the part of these domestic spies was not the least hard of the tasks imposed upon them, greedy and curious as they already were on the subject of the escaped son and heir of the house in which they served.

It was at the end of that first fortnight that one of the housemaids had a great fright.

Meadowlands, after the fashion of most respectable old family mansions, had a ghost. It was said that before the death of any member of the family, a shape like a monk with hood pulled over his head and partially concealing his face, would glide through the house between midnight and dawn.

The apparition had not been seen by any one now for more than a century. Perhaps, when the elder branch of the family died out the ghost-monk had vanished, thinking it beneath its dignity to haunt the younger line.

The housemaid, Fanny, a nervous, excitable girl, under notice from Mrs. Page to leave because of her flighty and

gossiping propensities, awakened one night about one o'clock with a racking toothache. She remembered that she had left the remedy she had been using in the servants' hall, and, unable to sleep for the pain, rose to go for it. The servant who shared her room was fast asleep. She did not like to disturb her to ask her to go with her, and though she did not half like the idea of making the journey alone, she encouraged herself by the fact that, at any rate, the night-nurse in Mr. Egerton's room would be up, while very probably Mr. Gilbert himself would not yet have gone to bed, for he sat up very late; and though they would both be in another wing, still it was some support to her courage to know that she was not the only one up in the great silent house. She reached the servants' hall safely, found her bottle, and started back to her room.

She had to traverse part of the stone corridor to reach the back staircase. Just as she reached the foot of the staircase, her candle casting a feeble glimmer in the great dark corridor about her, but leaving the farther end in gloomy shadow, she caught a faint sound coming from beyond, in the direction of the housekeeper's room. With a frightened start she turned to look, and there, dimly outlined in the darkness of the doorway, she saw a shape—a shadow——

Yes, blurred, indistinct as it was, her own eyes dazzled by the light of her candle coming between her and it, she was still able to distinguish the monkish garment—the bent, cowl-covered head. With a stifled shriek, her candlestick dropping with a clatter from her nerveless hands, she turned and fled up the stairs, and rushing into her room she flung herself, in a wild paroxysm of terror, on to the bed of her sleeping fellow-servant, waking her in a fright almost as great as her own.

Before the next evening every servant in the house, with the exception of the butler and head footman, and every man in the grounds and stables, had heard that the wicked monk was walking again, and that Mr. Egerton was going to die. The staff of under servants were too much in awe of the butler and his right hand, the head footman, to carry the story to him; while they all felt instinctively that Mrs. Page would make short work of any one under her authority who saw such visions at a time when she was so distressed and troubled herself about her master's illness.

Thus it happened that a day or two went

by before it reached her ears. It was then that Mademoiselle Sophie, Mrs. Egerton's maid, told her. Mrs. Page had begun to notice and to be puzzled by the presence of some unusual excitement among the servants. She detected a dislike on their part to go about the house in the evening unless in twos. The under footman, Henry, one night after the lights were out, manifestly betrayed his reluctance to fetch something the nurse needed from the butler's pantry; while the next evening Mrs. Page herself, coming suddenly and noiselessly upon two of the maids as they were putting Hope's bedroom straight for the night while she was down at dinner, startled them so that they both screamed, staring at her for a moment as if she had frightened them out of their wits.

Mrs. Page had no patience with nerves, at any rate when they were displayed by any of her own class.

For the first time, too, that day the doctors had seen a slight improvement in Mr. Egerton's condition.

As is often the case after a prolonged strain, Mrs. Page's relief showed itself in irritability. She commented rather severely on the silliness and feather-heads of the young maids, who became good for nothing directly there was any anxiety or trouble in the house.

"One would have thought I was a ghost or something creeping in upon them, to warn them what they might expect for their slipshod work!" she said testily, as she sat at supper with the privileged upper servants.

The lady's-maid, who though a great lady in the servants' world herself, was as fond of a gossip as the kitchen-maids themselves, and who was, therefore, more often taken into the general confidence than the housekeeper, found the remark an opening for the ghost story. She had been pledged to secrecy; but it was too interesting an incident to keep to herself any longer.

"And dat foolish Henry!" she added. "He says he did see the horrible creature in de grounds last night again when he was coming from de doctor's house, and dat was why he would not fetch dat champagne for de nurse. It was standing on de lawn under de coppare beech looking to Mr. Egerton's window. It was very dark, but Henry did see it quite clear while he could count one, two, tree—den it vanished."

Mrs. Page listened aghast and silent, while the possibility of the wicked monk

walking again was discussed by the others. Directly after supper she went to speak to Gilbert Egerton.

She found him in his own sitting-room, whither he had retired after dinner. He had flung himself down on the couch, and was lying there fast asleep. He was worn out. The improvement in his father's condition, slight though it was, had brought a welcome relief to the terrible tension of the past two weeks, and he was sleeping restfully and peacefully, as he had not slept for days.

Mrs. Page, walking gently up to the couch, looked down at him for a moment, reluctant to disturb him.

His face was pale and thin, but the set sternness which had hardened it ever since his father's illness had softened; there was something boyish in the fair-skinned face—now that the features were relaxed in quiet sleep—the ruffled hair, the attitude of the arm as it pillowed the head, all adding to this effect of youthfulness.

"Heaven! He's not much more than a boy himself," she thought pitifully. "And it has been hard upon him, for all that he has played at being the dandy-like, and taking things easy. He's been so far the best of the two, and yet Master Wilfred's had the most of the love. Perhaps it's a punishment for the Egerton pride. It seems natural that they should think a lot of themselves, being what they are; but perhaps the Lord Almighty doesn't like it, seeing that it was He, after all, that had the making of them, and it was no help of theirs that turned them into Egertons."

It seemed so great a pity to wake him, when he was so much in need of rest, that Mrs. Page hesitated a minute or two. It was pleasant, too, to her to see the softened, happier look on his face.

It was long before she was to see it again. But the need of saving Wilfred Egerton from his own folly and daring overcame her reluctance. He started up, wide awake in an instant, as she gently touched him.

"Mr. Gilbert," she said earnestly, as she ended her story, "is there no chance of getting him away this week? For, of course, it is him playing at the ghost-monk. I wonder he has been able to keep quiet, shut up there so long. And he'll spoil everything. He is so mad and reckless."

"I've done my best," said Gilbert heavily. "But the friend that I count on to help me is not leaving for America now

till next week. I couldn't even see him the other day, for he was in Paris. When he comes back he is going abroad again for a long time. He is to go first to San Francisco, and from there to China and Central Asia. I am going to ask him to take Wilfred with him, disguised as his servant. He will do it, I believe. And even if he should refuse, he will keep the secret. He is to be away for some years, off the beaten track of Europeans and tourists, and there is the chance of Wilfred being kept out of sight for a long time. If he refuses to help me I must think out some other plan. But I can see none so good."

"Heaven grant he will accept!" said Mrs. Page. "But I wish Mr. Wilfred could get away sooner. Mr. Gilbert!" impelled to speak, "I wish we could have followed your advice, and not let Miss Brown——"

He stared at her, his face blanching. "You don't mean to say that he has been playing his wiles on her?" he asked in a queer hoarse voice.

Then as she stared back blankly at him, he turned on his heel, and walking over to a glass hanging on one of the walls, smoothed down his ruffled hair and arranged his tie.

But she could still catch the reflection of his face in the mirror, and it was as white as his shirt-front.

"Heaven save us!" prayed the good soul to herself.

The young man faced her again. "Yes," he said steadily, twisting out the points of his moustache in his coxcomb fashion. "It was too heavy work to expect from her; I wonder it hasn't knocked her up completely. That infernal passage is enough to choke off a rat. But she is the bravest and truest-hearted girl I know."

Mrs. Page left the room, with an admiration and respect for her young master such as she had never yet felt for him. "Mr. Wilfred may have dishonoured himself to save a great lady's name," she thought to herself, as she returned to her room bewildered by all the complications arising out of this most miserable affair. "But it seems a queer kind of chivalry, or whatever they call it, beside Mr. Gilbert's."

But that effort to defend Hope from even the suspicion of being influenced by or attracted to a man whose past record was so black, had been greater than even she measured it.

After she left the room Gilbert Egerton

dropped into a chair near him, for the moment mentally and physically collapsed. He sat there staring at his feet, immaculately encased in red silk hose and patent leather shoes. The string of the latter had come unfastened, and as the dangling lace slowly forced itself on his consciousness, he carefully and neatly retied it, then stretching out his feet contemplated them once more with deep gravity from another angle.

They were well-shaped, though, perhaps, rather too small for a man of his size, and he was always very particular as to their adornment.

Miss Brown had once said, in his hearing, that she hated small feet and hands in a man, and that a man who descended to fantasies in socks deserved the consideration of no human being who respected his own soul.

He laughed suddenly as he recalled the little vicious speech. The sound of his own laugh roused him from the semi-stupor which seemed to have taken possession of his senses. He straightened himself mechanically, stretched out a hand to take a cigar from a box on the table near him, thinking, still a little stupidly—for his brain had not yet quite regained its activity—how all through life Wilfred and he had stood in the attitude of rivals—and Wilfred had always won. In the first place his three years' seniority had given him an advantage, of which he had always made full use.

In the early days of their boyhood, every one had made much of Wilfred, while Gilbert came and went unnoticed. The very tutors gave the chief of their attention to their most brilliant pupil, overlooking the younger. At Eton it was the same thing. Wilfred, adored or hated by his schoolfellows, either rousing the anger, or the tolerance, or the genuine liking of the masters, was always a brilliant, picturesque personality, while that of his brother, except to those in his immediate circle, was as unknown and commonplace. Later on, it was the same thing. Though after the schooldays their ways separated, they still for a time were brought enough

into contact to make the jar of this perpetual rivalry constantly felt.

More than one pleasant flirtation—and it must be confessed that with the wayward fancies of youth Gilbert Egerton had embarked on his full share—had been spoiled by Wilfred coming between him and the divinity reigning, for the moment, over his taste, imagination, or affections, or whatever part of him happened to be engaged in this particular worship.

For the last year or two this rivalry had been practically silent, except as it lived silently in the love of their mother. But Wilfred's life had been, otherwise, so entirely severed from that of his family, that he and Gilbert had managed to keep out of each other's way.

Yet once more——

A savage light began to kindle in Gilbert's dull eyes.

The very first time they met again the old rivalry blazed up anew.

The old rivalry! That was but a feeble spark to this. Was Wilfred always to come between him and the things he valued most?

Upstairs, his father, struck down by Wilfred's sins, lay close to death. And at last, even between himself and his father, his brother had come. His brother had darkened his father's last conscious thought of him with a doubt—a doubt he might carry with him, unanswered, into the grave.

Yet even this was not sufficient. Once more Wilfred had stepped between him and the woman he loved—loved, not with the old fickle fancy, but with all his heart and soul.

That moment in the garden, when Hope faced him with that passion of indignation in her eyes, had been a revelation to him. Her simple heroism had fanned into flame the love which had been slowly gathering up in his heart for her.

And here, once again, Wilfred had defeated him. He set his teeth in a mad burst of rage and bitterness.

"Curse him!" he said, and the hand with the unlighted cigar struck the arm of the chair. "He shall pay me yet!"

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE clock in Mrs. Romaine's drawing-room chimed the half-hour—half-past four—and Mrs. Romaine glanced up as she heard it. She was alone, sitting at her writing-table answering invitations. She was looking better than she had looked on the preceding day—less haggard, and physically stronger—and apparently the reassertion of her physical strength was not without an effect upon its mental counterpart, for there was a singular expression of vigour and determination about her face.

She answered and put aside the last invitation-card, and then she drew out a letter in a straight, clear, girl's writing. It was signed, "Affectionately yours, Maud Pomeroy," and it bore reference to Miss Pomeroy's prospective visit to her. Mrs. Romaine glanced through it, the vigour of her face seeming to accentuate as she did so, and then proceeded to write a few cordial, affectionate lines in answer. She was just directing the envelope when a servant came in with tea.

Mrs. Romaine rose.

"Send these letters to the post," she said.

She glanced at the clock again as she spoke, and at that moment the front door-bell rang.

Left alone, Mrs. Romaine moved quickly to the looking-glass, and took an anxious, critical look at herself; it was as though she had learnt to distrust her ap-

pearance; the inspection, however, proved satisfactory, apparently; and as she turned quickly away as she heard steps upon the stairs, there was a certain self-dependence and sense of power in the bright, expectant keenness of her eyes.

"Mr. Loring!" announced the servant, and Mr. Loring followed his name into the room.

"I am very glad to see you," said Mrs. Romaine, advancing to meet him with a pretty cordiality. "This is a much better way of welcoming a friend than our meeting yesterday. I think I shall celebrate the occasion by saying not at home to any one else. Julian will be in perhaps, and he will like to have you to himself. Not at home, Dawson," she added in conclusion, turning to the maid.

There was a verve and brightness about her manner which was not exactly its usual vivacity, and which faintly, and all unconsciously, suggested the presence of some kind of special excitement in her mind.

Loring's perceptions were in a state of rather abnormal acuteness; the situation had meanings for him, which had braced up his forces not inconsiderably. He detected that inward excitement about Mrs. Romaine instantly, and he was convinced also, though he could hardly have given a reason for the conviction, that there was not the smallest chance of Julian's appearance. Both circumstances he reckoned as points in his favour in the game he was going to play.

"It's very charming of you," he said. "Do you know this is the first time I have really felt that coming back to London means—something."

He took the chair she had indicated to him on the other side of the little tea-

table as he spoke, and there was nothing lame or unfinished about the words spoken as he spoke them. His eyes were fixed upon Mrs. Romaine, but she was pouring out tea with so intent a look on her face as almost to suggest preoccupation. She did not look up, nor did the tone of his voice reach her, except superficially, apparently, for she replied with a pleasant, friendly laugh.

"I should hope it did mean 'something,' indeed," she said. "Friends should count for 'something,' surely, especially when they have really taken the trouble to miss you very much. Have you had such an unusually fascinating time in Africa, then?"

She handed him a cup of tea, and as he rose to take it from her, he answered:

"Well, not exactly that. I'm afraid I don't believe in fascinating times, you know. Perhaps I am too much of a pessimist."

He spoke with that tone of personal revelation and confidence which is always more or less attractive to a woman, coming from a man; and Mrs. Romaine responded with the gentle loftiness of sympathy which the position demanded. If the tone sat a little artificially upon her, it certainly did not betray itself in any want of kindness.

"I've often been afraid you felt like that," she said. "And it is really quite wrong of you, don't you know. You ought to be such a particularly well-satisfied person! I suppose you are horribly ambitious? Now tell me, has your business gone off as well as you hoped? I have been so interested in your delightful articles!"

"Does anything go off as well as one had hoped?" was the reply, spoken with a cynical smile, indeed, but with a certain daring deprecation of her disapproval, which was not unattractive. "No, I ought not to carp," he continued quickly. "I have every reason to be satisfied."

His tone implied considerably more in the way of success and latent possibilities about his present position than the words themselves conveyed, and Mrs. Romaine answered with cordial, delicately expressed congratulations, which drifted into a species of general questionings as to his doings, less directly personal, but implying that he might count on her sympathy if he chose to confide in her in greater detail. This was no part of Loring's plan, however. He led by almost imperceptible

degrees away from the subject, and before very long they were talking London gossip as though he had never been away, the only perceptible result of his absence evincing itself in the touch of additional intimacy which his return seemed to have given their relations, necessarily at Mrs. Romaine's instigation.

The talk touched here and there, and by-and-by an enquiry from Loring after a mutual friend elicited a crisper laugh than usual, and an expressive movement of the eyebrows, from Mrs. Romaine.

"Haven't you heard?" she said. "Oh, it's an old story now, of course! Well, they don't come to town this season, I believe. Lady Ashton suffers from—neuralgia!"

She laughed again, and then in response to a cynical and incredulously interrogative ejaculation from Loring, she clasped her hands lightly on her knee and went on with the animation of a woman who has a good story to tell and enjoys telling it.

"She contracted the complaint, they say, in a poky little church in Kensington into which Gladys Ashton strolled one afternoon and got herself married. Oh, dear no! Her mother wasn't there! That's one of the points of the affair. And Lord Rochdale wasn't there either."

"Gladys Ashton jilted Rochdale after all?"

"After all!" assented Mrs. Romaine gaily. "After all that poor woman's trouble, after the quite pathetic way in which she has slaved to catch him, she gets a letter from the ungrateful girl—at an afternoon tea, too, heaps of people there—to say that she is Mrs. Bob Stewart. Baccarat Bob you wretched men at the clubs call him, don't you?"

"That was enough to induce convulsions, let alone neuralgia," commented Loring.

"Convulsions," returned Mrs. Romaine. "Oh, yes, there have been convulsions right enough. Poor old Fitzhugh has done that part of the business. Lord Rochdale had to be consoled, you see, and Mrs. Fitzhugh was an old hand at the work. 'Nous revenons toujours,' and all that, don't you know?"

They both laughed, and the laugh was succeeded by a moment's silence. Then Loring said casually:

"What has become of your cousin, Falconer, among other people, by-the-bye? I don't hear anything of him, and his grim

presence was hardly to be overlooked. Have you any little escapade of his to reveal, now?"

Mrs. Romaine laughed lightly.

"Unfortunately not," she said; and that constraint which had always been used to haunt her tone in speaking of Dennis Falconer, was no longer there. "His absence is due to the most characteristically orthodox causes. He was ill about three months ago. He went into a hospital sort of place—one of those new things—and he was rather bad. Now he's somewhere or other recovering. I fancy he won't be in London again yet."

Loring received the news with a comment as indifferent as his question had been, and then there fell a second silence. Loring's eyes, very keen and calculating, were fixed upon the carpet; on Mrs. Romaine's face was an accentuation of the intent, preoccupied look which had lain behind all her previous gaiety. The two faces suggested curiously that the man and woman alike felt individually and each irrespective of the other that something in the shape of a prologue was over, and that the real interest of the interview might begin.

The silence was broken by Mrs. Romaine; she pushed the tea-table further from her and leant comfortably—and gracefully—back in her chair, as she said casually:

"Did you and Julian meet at the club last night?"

Loring followed her example and took an easier and more careless pose.

"Yes!" he said. "We had an hour's talk together. I was very glad I had looked in. I hardly expected to find him there!"

Mrs. Romaine laughed and the sound was rather forced. "Oh," she said lightly, "he is a tremendous clubbist! All young men go through the phase, don't you think?" She paused a moment and her voice sounded as though her breath was coming rather quickly as she said carelessly:

"You find him a good deal altered, I dare say? Six months"—she paused; her breath was troublesome—"six months makes such a difference at his time of life!" she finished.

Loring looked at her. He had long ago decided that when a woman was "made up" it was of very little use to direct observation to anything but her eyes.

"Yes!" he said reflectively, as though

debating a question already existing in his mind, and answering it for the first time. "He is altered! I suppose—yes, I suppose six months must make a difference!"

A sharp breath as at a sudden stab of pain had parted Mrs. Romaine's lips at his first words, and he saw a hard, defiant brightness come into her eyes.

"I was very glad to see—well, may one allude to what one could not help seeing yesterday?" he went on in another and much lighter tone.

"One may allude to it confidentially!" returned Mrs. Romaine, and her gay tone was rather high-pitched and uneven. "Not otherwise, I am sorry to say—at present! Did Julian say anything about it?" Her tone as she asked the question was carelessness itself, but her fingers were tightly clenched round her handkerchief as she waited for the answer.

"A word or two!" returned Loring. "I inferred that it was only a question of time. Has it been going on long?"

"All the winter!" she answered, and again there was that little forced laugh. "You see, unfortunately, 'she' has been away! I had hoped that it would have come off before she went away, but it didn't!"

She stopped rather abruptly; and Loring, watching her keenly, said:

"You think it is time he should marry?"

"I think—well, yes, I suppose I do! Don't you agree with me? You young men are so apt to get into mischief, you know!"

"I suppose I can hardly deny the general principle," answered Loring with a slight smile, "though it is some time since I have been a young man in any practical sense! But as to Julian, I hardly know——"

"But you must know!" returned Mrs. Romaine quickly, and with an affected laugh. "And you must know, in the first place, that I'm relying on you for a good deal of co-operation—oh, of course, not in these delicate affairs!"

A certain shade of attention—just that attention which might become gravely or gaily sympathetic according to the demand made upon him—appeared in Loring's manner. He replied to her last words with a gesture of mock deprecation which answered the tone in which they were spoken; but a quiet, reliable interest touched his voice as he spoke which seemed to respond rather to the possibilities of the situation.

"You have only to command me!" he said.

There was a hungry intentness about Mrs. Romaine's mouth now, and about her clenched hand, which only a tremendous effort and the sacrifice of all reality of tone could have kept out of her voice.

"To tell you the truth," she said lightly, "there was rather a catastrophe in the autumn; a girl, you know, silly boy—the usual thing! I fancy it has upset him a good deal in every way, and there is nothing like marriage for settling a young man down after such an affair!"

She paused as though—while her confidence in her statement, and the point of view from which she had presented the matter stood in no need of confirmation—she yet hungered to hear it subscribed to by another voice. And Loring nodded with grave, attentive assent.

"Quite so!" he said sententiously.

"Now, of course," she continued, "of course a woman can't know all the ins and outs of a young man's life, even when she's his mother. It's out of the question; and to be very frank with you"—there was something painful now about the lightness of her tone—"his mother had to be rather autocratic, and the boy didn't much like it. Consequently I can't feel sure that—well, that she knows even as much as she might about his affairs, now! That's why I'm confiding in you in this expansive way! I want you to look after him for me!"

Loring changed his position, and nodded again gravely and comprehendingly.

"I understand!" he said slowly. "I understand!" The statement was true in far wider sense than Mrs. Romaine could be aware of. There was a moment's silence, during which he seemed to deliberate deeply on the facts presented to him, watched intently by Mrs. Romaine; and then he roused himself, as it were. "I won't say that your confidence in me gives me great pleasure," he said, "because I hope you know that. I will simply say that I will do all I can!"

The words were admirably spoken, with a gentleness and consideration of tone and manner which were all the more striking from their contrast with his usual demeanour; and they carried an impression of strength and sympathy such as no woman could have resisted. A strange spasm as of intense relief passed across Mrs. Romaine's face, and for the moment she did not speak. Then she said low and hurriedly:

"I have heard that he gambles, and it—it worries me! A boy will often listen to a friend whom he respects, and—and—I rely on you."

"I consider myself honoured!"

A pause followed, and then Loring continued with an easy seriousness which was very reassuring:

"I am very glad to know all this, for it gives me a key, without which I might have blundered considerably! To return confidence for confidence, and to assure you that I really have some power to help you, I will say that I made a little discovery about Julian yesterday which perplexed me a good deal. I shall know now how to act. If he must speculate——"

He was interrupted. The daintily coloured face before him, set so resolutely into an expression of carelessness, changed suddenly and terribly; a ghastly reality that lay behind that artificiality seemed on the instant to crash through all veils and masks as Mrs. Romaine rose to her feet with a hoarse cry, her face drawn and working, her hands stretched out as though to ward off something unendurably horrible.

"No!" she gasped, and she was absolutely fighting and struggling for breath as though something clutched at her throat. "Not that! oh, good heavens, not that! You must stop it! You must prevent it. He must not! He must not! Do you hear me? He must not!"

There are some natures which not even contact with throbbing, vibrating reality can touch or thrill, and Loring, surprised, indeed, had risen also, cynical, imperturbable, and cool-headed as usual.

"By Jove!" he said to himself critically. "Who would have thought she had it in her?" The choked, agonised voice stopped abruptly, and he met her eyes, wild and fierce in their desperate command, and said quickly and soothingly:

"I will do anything you wish, I assure you! You have only to speak! I am grieved beyond all words to have distressed you so! I had no idea——"

A hoarse laugh broke from Mrs. Romaine and she turned away with a strange gesture almost as though it were herself she derided, and Loring was forgotten by her, clasping her hands fiercely over her face. Loring paused a moment and then went on smoothly:

"There is nothing to disturb you, I assure you, in what I was going to say. Most young men have a turn for dabbling

in speculation at some time or other, and though I know some ladies have a horror of it, I don't think you would find that there is much foundation for that horror." He stopped somewhat abruptly. He had suddenly remembered that he was speaking to the widow of William Romaine, of whose final collapse he knew the outline. He looked at the woman before him with her hidden face, her figure rigid and tense from head to foot, and thought to himself callously how curious these survivals of emotion were. She did not move or speak, and he went on with a tone of delicate sympathy:

"No doubt, if you really think it well to stop it with a high hand, it can be done! I ought to say that I have rather broken confidence in revealing Julian's doings, as he is very anxious that you should not think him dissatisfied or ungrateful, and did not wish you to hear of them." A shiver shook the bowed figure from head to foot. "I'm afraid I thought more of reassuring you than of him! I thought that if you knew that he and I were in the same affair, and that he would act solely on my advice, you would, perhaps, feel happier about him!"

But the answer he wanted, the answer which would have enabled him to continue his reassurances on the purely personal line, was not forthcoming. Mrs. Romaine neither spoke nor moved. He had no intention of risking his position by foolhardiness, so he adjusted his line of argument to the darkness in which her silence left him.

"As I said, however," he continued gently, "if you prefer to talk to him on the subject, and ask him to give it up, no doubt he will do so rather than distress you! And if you lay your commands on me to that effect, I will certainly refuse to go any further with him! But may I say that I think you would be wiser to let things take their course? It is not a good thing to thwart a young man in the frame of mind you have hinted at as being Julian's at present. If you can conquer your horror of the idea, I am sure you will be better satisfied in the end!"

There was a dead silence. At last Mrs. Romaine raised her head slowly, not turning her face towards Loring, but looking straight before her, as though utterly oblivious of his personal presence. There was a strange, fleeting dignity about her drawn face, with its wide, ghastly eyes; the dignity which comes from horror confronted.

"Take their course!" she said in a still, far-away voice. She paused a moment, and then went on in the same tone. "You think this is—inevitable?" The last word came with a strange ring.

"I think that any attempt at its prevention would be most undesirable," said Loring. "It might lead—of course, it is not very likely, but still it is possible—to private speculations on Master Julian's part!"

"Very well, then!" There was a curious, hard steadiness in her tone, as of one who perforce concedes a point to an adversary, and braces every nerve afresh to face the new situation thus created.

"That is like you!" exclaimed Loring admiringly. The tone of her voice had passed him by. "You will be glad, I know! Now, let me say again how awfully sorry I am to have distressed you, and then I'll go. You'll be glad to get rid of me!"

She did not seem to hear the words, but as his voice ceased, she turned her face slowly towards him with a vague, uncertain look upon it, as though her consciousness was struggling back to him, and the life he represented, across a great gulf. She looked at him a moment, and then that dignity, and a strange pathos which that groping look had possessed, gave way before a ghastly smile.

"I'm afraid I've been making myself most ridiculous!" she said, and there was a difficult, uncertain sprightliness about her weak voice. "So awfully sorry! I'm rather absurd about speculation. Old memories with which I needn't bore you! You'll look after my boy, then? Thanks!" She held out her hand as she spoke with a little affected gesture, but as he placed his hand in it her fingers closed with an icy clutch. "And now, do you know, I must send you away! Too bad, isn't it? But there is such a thing as dressing for dinner."

"Quite so," returned Loring gaily. "It is very good of you to have been bothered with me so long! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" she answered. "You'll report progress, of course?"

"Certainly! We're a pair of conspirators, are we not?"

When Mrs. Romaine came down to dinner that night her face was as haggard as though the interval intervening had held for her another three days' illness. But the hard determination in her eyes was more intense than ever.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IT was not generally known among his acquaintances that Marston Loring had come back from Africa accompanied by a new friend; this new friend was not introduced by Loring at either of his clubs, and yet the two met at least once every day. He was a man named Alfred Ramsay; a small, insignificant-looking man, with sandy hair, which had turned—in streaks—the peculiar grey which such hair assumes, and small, dull eyes that never seemed to move in his head.

It was nearly three o'clock on the afternoon following that on which Loring had called on Mrs. Romaine, and he and his new friend were together in his chambers in the Temple. Mr. Ramsay had been there several times before, and he was sitting now in an arm-chair in the sunshine with an air of total want of interest in his surroundings, which was characteristic of him. Loring was walking up and down the room thoughtfully.

"Romaine!" observed Ramsay. "Not a particularly good name on the market! It belonged to a first-class swindler twenty years ago—William Romaine. This young gentleman is no connexion, I suppose?"

The remark broke a short silence, and Loring stopped in his walk and leant back against the mantelpiece as he answered.

"Yes," he said tersely, "he's his son. He has never been in his father's line though—I doubt whether he knows anything about him, though it's an odd thing that he shouldn't. As to the name, why, it's an old story, and won't affect any one nowadays, I take it. The point is that he has this respectable capital, and is—exceedingly keen on increasing it."

There was a dryness in Loring's voice as he said the last words, which implied a great deal more than did his words. And it was apparently to that significance that the other man replied.

"A chip of the old block," said Ramsay musingly. "I wonder, now, how far it goes?"

The last words were spoken very slowly, and the dull eyes looked straight before them.

Loring looked down at him with a cynical smile just touching his lips. He knew considerably more about his new friend's character than he would have chosen to put into words, and he could guess, not inaccurately, what was passing

in his mind at the moment. And the realisation of the shadowy possibilities with which Ramsay was occupied was no part of Marston Loring's designs. He made no direct answer.

"He should be here by this time," he said carelessly.

And as he spoke there was a sharp, cheery rap at the door; it opened quickly, and Julian Romaine appeared, very boyish, very good-looking, and with a curious veiled keenness in his eyes.

"We were just expecting you," said Loring, greeting him with a friendly nod. "Let me introduce you to Mr. Alfred Ramsay."

Mr. Alfred Ramsay had risen to honour the introduction, turning his whole head slowly round as he looked at Julian, so that his eyes still gazed straight before them as they rested on the young man's face.

"Pleased to know you," he said indifferently.

"Very glad to make your acquaintance," responded Julian pleasantly. "I hope I'm not behind time?"

"Pretty fair," said Loring, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder with kindly patronage. "But Ramsay is a busy man, you know, so suppose we get to business at once. Ramsay," he continued, in a brisk, business-like voice, as the three sat down about the table, "Romaine knows nothing of the affair whatever. I shall begin by running over the preliminaries with him. And, first of all," he went on, turning to Julian, "of course it is understood, Romaine, that we keep the matter to ourselves."

He spoke in a curt, off-hand manner, and as Julian made a quick gesture of acquiescence, he went on in the same business-like tone.

"I don't know whether you know anything about the Welcome Diamond Mining Company?" he said. "Probably not. It was floated about this time last year, and the greater part of the business came into my hands. The shares were taken up all right, but—well, it didn't come to anything, and its affairs had something to do with my going out to the Cape. It was in connection with those same affairs that I and Ramsay met."

Julian had listened so far with a clouded countenance, and now, as Loring paused, he leant back in his chair with a movement of irrepressible disappointment.

"Oh!" he said shortly. "It's a mine, then?"

"There is a mine in connection with it," replied Loring imperturbably. "But you need not trouble yourself about the mine. That is only the figure-head, you understand. The affair itself is a matter of — arrangement. Look here, Romaine," he went on, as Julian leant suddenly forward across the table, "shares in the Welcome Diamond Mining Company are at this moment worth about five shillings each."

He paused. He had been leaning carelessly back in his chair, and now he moved, uncrossing his legs, and leaning one arm on the table.

"In a few days," he went on deliberately and significantly, "they will fall to two shillings." He paused again, with a slight, matter-of-course gesture. "That will be worked, of course," he said.

Julian nodded comprehension.

"Yes?" he said.

"At that price," continued Loring, "all the shares will be bought up by two or three men, in consequence of private information received from the Cape."

The last words came from Loring slowly and deliberately, and his eyes met Julian's significantly. A quick flash of understanding passed across Julian's face, and Loring continued easily:

"Reports to this effect will get about. The fact of the presence in London of a mining engineer from the vicinity of the Welcome will also get about. Perhaps he may allow himself to be interviewed, you know—nothing definite, of course. The shares will go up with a run."

He paused, and Julian threw himself back in his chair, tapping the table meditatively with one hand. His gaze was fixed upon the wall just over Loring's head, and there was a curious expression on his face which combined the keen matter-of-fact calculation of the habitual speculator with a certain unconscious gleam of hungry excitement which was eloquent of youth and inexperience. A minute or two passed, during which Mr. Ramsay's eyes rested indifferently on the young man's face, and then Julian spoke. His voice, also, in spite of his evident attempt at emulation of Loring's business-like nonchalance, was just touched by that youthful incapacity for holding keen personal interest in abeyance.

"And the private information received from the Cape will be supplied——?" he said interrogatively.

"Will be supplied by Ramsay," returned Loring.

The words were spoken with the slightest possible movement of the eyelids. Julian made a quick gesture of comprehension, and there was a moment's silence. Then Loring went on crisply, darting a quick glance at Julian's face in its calculating eagerness.

"In a private speculation of this kind, of course, it is a case of working together and share and share alike. Now, we propose—Ramsay and I, you understand—to make up a joint capital for the purchase of these shares. We are prepared to put into it fifteen thousand pounds between us, and we want another ten thousand at least. If you are prepared to put in that sum, or more, on the understanding that the profits—after each man has received back his original investment—are divided into three equal shares, we are willing to take you in with us."

Julian looked up at him quickly.

"Into three equal shares?" he said with a stress on the adjective.

"Into three equal shares," returned Loring drily. "Capital is not the sole requisite in this affair, and the other factors are supplied by Ramsay and myself."

A dark flush mounted to Julian's forehead, and the avidity in his eyes developed.

"It's a large order, though," he said. "I don't quite see where I come in at that rate, after all."

Loring leant back in his chair and looked him full in the face.

"You can please yourself, of course," he said. "Take it or leave it. You will come in to the tune of something like thirty thousand. If you see your way to trebling your capital by any other means do so. Lots of fellows will be glad to take your place with us."

Julian's eyes gleamed greedily, and he wavered obviously.

"Those are your final terms?" he said.

"Our final terms," said Loring concisely, looking at Ramsay, who nodded nonchalantly in confirmation of the words.

A silence ensued. Julian sat staring down at the table, his brows knit, evidently in close thought. At last he glanced up suddenly at the two men who had been waiting carelessly for his decision.

"I call it rather rough," he said brusquely; "but—all right. If the thing looks all right when you've trotted it out, I accept."

He passed on instantly with a brief

selling question to the inner working of the scheme.

There is perhaps nothing by which self-revelation is more frankly and unconsciously made than in the means by which a man may be most easily roused to enthusiasm. Enthusiasm—a genuine, feverish quickening of his mental pulses, even—had been a condition of things practically unknown to the easy-going, commonplace Julian Romaine of a year before; but in the course of the last two months he had experienced it often. To hear of large sums of money, large profits, rapid returns on striking investments, touched him, instinctively, as a record of artistic achievements will touch an artist, as triumph of research will touch a historian, as prodigies of physical prowess will touch an athlete. And as Loring answered him now, and went on with fuller and more technical detail, his face changed strikingly. His eyes brightened, and an eager, fascinated light came into them; he leant further forward, listening, commenting, questioning, with quick and always increasing excitement.

Half an hour passed, and still the three men sat about the table, talking in terse, business-like fashion; three-quarters of an hour; an hour. At the end of that time Julian, his face flushed and eager, his eyes glistening and sparkling, his hand absolutely shaking with excitement, was holding that hand out to Mr. Ramsay with a gesture which witnessed to the work of that hour, as volumes could not have done. As far as words went, he and Mr. Ramsay had hardly exchanged three sentences; it was the bond that lay behind the words that had drawn them together. Mr. Ramsay had spoken very little, indeed, but his silent presence had never for a moment seemed superfluous, or without a certain indefinite weight, and there was a dull approval in his slow eyes now as he turned them on the young man.

"We've settled so much, then," said Julian, in a quick, familiar way, "and we meet here on Thursday at two. Until then——" He turned to Loring, and stretched out his hand eagerly. "Thanks, old man," he said in a low, quick voice. "Thanks."

SOME FAMOUS ART SALES.

ALL great private collections of art and bric-à-brac sooner or later come to the

hammer. A living generation has seen dispersed the riches of Stowe, the treasures of Blenheim, the historic relics of Hamilton Palace. It is only public collections that have a chance of surviving the vicissitudes of life, that have no prodigal heirs to fear, or others too prudent who prefer a safer investment and so much per cent. to the barren honour of being custodian of historic treasures.

And turning to the sales of a former period, they rise before us, a long line of ancestors, whose beginnings are lost in the haze of antiquity. Athenian virtuosi probably exhibited with pride bibelots they had purchased at the Alcibiades sale, and Roman exquisites might boast of so many thousand sesterces paid for a famous Grecian vase. And although barbarian invaders had a short and summary way of disposing of art collections, yet doubtless they had their rude auctions of acquired plunder, while dealers hovered round the hosts, and picked up bargains in the midst of rapine and destruction. In mediæval times there was too much jostling and fighting to give people time to look after curios and bric-à-brac, and churches, monasteries, and favourite shrines were the only safe places of deposit for such perishable things. In our own country, the Reformation afforded a fine field for the dealer and collector, and although much precious work perished in the melting-pot, the spoils of the monasteries formed the nucleus of many a fine collection. King Harry himself had a fine taste in art. He duly appreciated Holbein—"he could make as many noblemen as he pleased, but not one Holbein"—and his taste in architecture, in furniture, in hangings, in jewellery and plate, seems to have been of the highest quality. This taste was not inherited by his children, and the Elizabethan age, the brightest period in literature, is one of decadence in art. But Charles the First was a connoisseur of exquisite taste, and the great artists of the day were his friends and advisers. The distracted state of Italy favoured the King's design of forming a truly regal collection of paintings, to adorn the magnificent palace he proposed to build at Whitehall, and his agents secured the rich galleries of the ducal family of Gonzaga, with other art treasures the loss of which English cognoscenti still deplore. For after the King's execution, the whole collection was sold piecemeal, chiefly to the agents of foreign Courts. The Spanish Ambassador

purchased what it required eighteen mules to carry from the port of landing to Madrid. The galleries of Vienna were enriched with the spoils of the English monarch. In France, Mazarin gloated over the bargains he had secured from the Paritan commissioners of the sale. Yet the collection realised one hundred and eighteen thousand pounds, a large sum for those days, and one which shows that Cromwell and his agents were alive to the value of what they were selling.

From this time sales became frequent of pictures, antiquities, and curios in general. Collections of doubtful old masters were offered on the part of dubious Italian princes. Men like Evelyn, who had visited foreign galleries and assumed a knowledge of art and virtu; officials, like Mr. Samuel Pepys, who were picking up gold and silver in the national Tom Tiddler's ground; old Cavaliers, such as Sir Kenelm Digby and Prince Rupert, set the fashion of a gentle mania for collecting objects of art.

The chief marts of the period were in Covent Garden, and here the trade remained till well into the following century. Here in 1733, Mr. Cock, in the great Piazza, sold the interesting collections made in the previous century by Sir Robert Cotton. The MSS. were not included, as Sir Robert's descendants had presented them to the nation, and these, with Sir Hans Sloane's collection and the Harley MSS., went to form the corpus of our national museum, as first established at Montagu House. But the rest of Lord Harley's antiques and curios were sold by auction, by Mr. Cock, in the Piazza, where Horace Walpole was among the buyers, bidding cautiously, and not reckless of his guineas, but gradually building up the collection that was to make Strawberry Hill so famous.

Under the same Piazza Lingford flourished his hammer over the choice collection of Dr. Mead, when that great physician and excellent man paid the debt of nature in 1754. Hogarth had his own auction at his house in Leicester Square, whither he invited the world to come and bid for his "Marriage à la Mode." But only one purchaser made his appearance, to whom the pictures were knocked down at his own price, one hundred and twenty guineas. This fiasco naturally increased Hogarth's fury against the dealers of the day, and the "black masters" whose pictures attracted the crowd, whether to the Piazza, or to Ford's

in the Haymarket, or to Patterson's at Essex House. Presently Christie came upon the scene, one of whose early sales was the collection of a Pope, Paul the Fourth, brought from Rome to Pall Mall in 1770. Again in 1773, we find Christie offering "Statues, bustos, bas-reliefs, etc.," purchased by the brothers Adam in Italy. From the conjunction of names, we may make a guess as to Mr. Christie's country of origin. For we may remember David Garrick's saying, "that his friends, the Adams, were the most liberal-minded men he knew, yet somehow they employed nobody but Scotchmen." David himself was a frequenter of Christie's sale-rooms in Pall Mall, and Gainsborough from his rooms at Schomburg House on the other side of the way, and Dr. Johnson and his satellite James Boswell.

Gainsborough died in 1788, and his collection was sold by his friend Christie in 1792. In the latter year died Reynolds, and for his pictures and curios the same auctioneer performed the last offices. Again, when Lord Bute's collection came to the hammer in 1796, a few years after the once famous statesman's death, it was like bringing a former generation into evidence, and the riots and frolics of the days of Wilkes and Liberty. In the same year appears a catalogue of the small gallery of Field-Marshal Wade, of "blessed" memory in connection with Highland roads, a memory that went back to the 'forty-five, and the invasion of the clans.

But the auction-rooms also reflected the lurid glow of the French Revolution. Far-seeing French nobles had transferred their choicest treasures to England when the movement first began. M. de Calonne, who had essayed to restore the finances of the falling monarchy before M. Necker undertook the hopeless task, had prudently transferred his gallery of pictures to London, and they were offered for sale by Skinner and Dyke, at the great rooms in Spring Gardens, in 1795. The history of the Orleans collection, which was brought to England in the early days of the Revolution, would form a romance to itself. Acquired by the Regent Orleans, who was at more pains to enrich his collection than to secure the interests of France, and whose agents were backed by diplomatic pressure and the resources of the monarchy, the Regent's galleries in the Palais Royal were perhaps the finest in Europe. But they narrowly escaped ruin at the hands of his son, a weak and prudish person, who

gave orders that all pictures of the nude should be destroyed. The next Duke was more engrossed in politics than in art, and he required money above all things, hoping to direct the revolutionary storm to his own advantage. A M. de Mereville bought all his pictures of the Italian school, and they were safely transferred to England, whither their new owner followed them and thus saved his head from the guillotine, a fate that overtook his father, a rich banker, who it is to be presumed found the money for the purchase. But the Flemish and Dutch collection still remained, and a small syndicate of English noblemen determined to secure it. The agent for the purchase, Mr. Thomas Moore Slade, was himself a remarkable figure in the art sale history of the period. Originally a man of fortune, he settled as a young man at Venice, in 1774, acquired the Vitturi collection and other fine pictures, and when the American revolutionary war began, and the French joined in, he determined to transfer his treasures to England; taking the precaution to address all the cases to the Italian Ambassador, M. Cavalli. The ship that carried them was taken by a French privateer, but M. Cavalli claimed the cargo, and eventually secured its restitution, and the captors lost a noble prize, which, had the truth been known, was justly theirs according to the laws of prize. But Slade, while he increased his fortune by investments in art, lost it all by trade speculation. He joined an enterprise for "making cloth without spinning or weaving"—shoddy, in fact, but before its time. Anyhow, it ruined Mr. Slade, who was thus found a proper agent for a somewhat risky enterprise. Well supplied with funds, Slade arrived in Paris on the very day on which the unhappy French King had made his escape from his keepers, and in all the tumult of the recapture and bringing back of the Royal Family, Slade was busy negotiating at the Palais Royal. Finally the bargain was struck. But the news of the sale had oozed out, and the gallery was surrounded by an excited crowd, who were disposed to resist the removal of the pictures by force. It needed little to set the people to tearing Mr. Slade to pieces or hanging him to the nearest lamp. But some new excitement called away the crowd, and Slade, who had everything ready, smuggled the pictures on board a barge on the Seine, which quietly dropped down the river to Havre, while a committee of patriotic art-lovers had arranged to arrest

the collection on its presumed route to Calais.

"Now we have almost repaired the loss of our Charles the First collection!" exclaimed English virtuosi, when they heard of the safe arrival of the Orleans collection. Which reminds one of the Scotch doctor in England, who, summing up the casualties among his patients, remarked: "We've not made up for Flodden yet!"

The sale of the Orleans collection by private contract, after some months' exhibition in the London sale-rooms, was the great event of the end of the century. But now, owing to the success of the French arms, treasures poured in upon England in a continuous stream. The great Italian families were selling their choicest pictures in alarm, and astute English agents bought them up. It was the same in Spain, and under the very noses of Napoleon and his Marshals, the choicest pictures were secured and packed off. Many were the unrecorded adventures of the great masterpieces that now adorn our public and private galleries. Often, to avoid detention at the ports, the cases were shipped under feigned names and with false descriptions. The Altieri Claudes, smuggled out of Italy, lay so long at the English Custom House unclaimed that they were sold at last to pay charges, and fetched one thousand two hundred pounds. But the syndicate which had bought them in Italy, contrived to get them back, and sold them to Beckford at Fonthill for ten thousand guineas. Our Consuls and diplomatic agents abroad were often engaged in this art trade. Udney, at Leghorn, realised a handsome fortune in old masters. Our Ambassador at Naples, Sir William Hamilton, secured a vast collection of objects of art; part of which were acquired by the British Museum, while another part went to the bottom of the sea in the wreck of the "Colossus," off the Scilly Isles, and a third was sold by public auction.

Enriched by all these acquisitions, which raised England from being one of the poorest countries in works of the great masters, to perhaps the richest in private collections of the same, yet sales went on merrily from the very opening of the present century, so that hardly a year passes without some fine collection being brought to the hammer. It is curious to read of the sale, in 1808, of Mr. Speaker Lenthall's pictures, who died 1662; but the collection had been carefully preserved at the family

seat at Burford, till its time came to share the general fate. The great sale of the first quarter of the century was that at Fonthill, of the treasures of "Vathek" Beckford, the son of the patriotic Lord Mayor, whose monument is conspicuous in the City Guildhall, and the builder of a magnificent palace, which soon after tumbled to pieces of its own weight. The world of rank and fashion spread itself over those Wiltshire plains, great dames and noble lords picnicked in humble cottages, and the sale-room—admission by catalogue; price, twelve shillings and sixpence—was a forest of waving plumes, for all ladies of fashion wore ostrich feathers in those days. Yet there were good virtuosi among the titled crowd, for the Court of George the Fourth, if not distinguished for virtue, was a good school of virtue. The King himself had a fine taste in art and bric-à-brac, and enriched the Royal collections with the best part of their most valuable items. And it must not be forgotten that he urged the purchase for the nation of the Angerstein collection in 1824, which was virtually the foundation of the National Gallery.

The next historic occasion is the sale of the Strawberry Hill collection in 1842, at the instance of Lord Waldegrave, who had inherited Horace Walpole's art treasures. But the public taste had changed. Tom Towers, from his editorial chair, sneered at the whole affair, while the florid eloquence of Mr. Robins, the auctioneer, aided in giving a tinge of ridicule to the dispersal of this really grand collection. There was, in fact, a bear market in curios, and dealers profited as usual. That magnificent enamel known as the hunting-horn of Francis the First was sold for one hundred and fourteen pounds five shillings. At Christie's last year it was knocked down after a brisk competition at six thousand three hundred guineas. And by those "in the know," as the saying is, bargains almost as good were made at the Strawberry Hill sale.

The Stowe sale in 1848 may metaphorically "take the cake" as the biggest sale, hitherto, in the century. Stowe is a wonderful place in itself, the work of "brave Cobham," the friend of Pope, who, instead of sneering, as at "Timon's villa," commemorates the design in terms that are perhaps meant to be sincere:

Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Unites the woods, and varies shades from shades;
Nature shall join you; time shall make it grow,
A work to wonder at—perhaps a Stowe.

The wonder of the present century was to see the crowd pouring into these aristocratic shades, whistling and singing under the Corinthian arch, galloping shouting up the mile long avenue, and dashing over the Palladian Bridge, tax carts, chariots, fours-in-hand, donkey-barrows, like the crowd on the way to Epsom Downs on a Derby day. The sale lasted forty days, which is perhaps a record, but it was not all art, for it included all the appurtenances of an immense establishment.

The Bernal collection, sold in the same year, was really richer in the objects of art that the collector values most. Ralph Bernal was an illustrious collector, and, initiated in all the mysteries of the craft, an industrious hunter in brokers' shops, in dealers' collections, in art sale-rooms, and with an unfailing instinct for a good thing. And the true collector dates rather from the Bernal sale than the more showy one of Stowe, in the same year.

But the epoch-making sale was that of the Gillott collection in 1872—Gillott with two "l's" and two "t's"; "all others are fraudulent counterfeits," as one used to read on the steel-pen boxes of other days. A good homely creature was the leviathan steel-pen maker, who captivated the great Turner in the crankiest of his moods, and tamed him by the music of crisp thousand-pound notes. "What will you take for the lot?" was traditionally the penman's question, as he glanced in real awe round the great artist's studio, where paintings were stacked as if in a broker's shop. "Thirty thousand pounds," growled the artist, who might have been the broker's man as far as appearances went. Gillott sat down to count out the notes without another word. But Turner stopped him; it was no deal, said the artist, yet the man with the notes might have a few. And the penmaker carried off some of the best pictures in triumph. And now these priceless Turners were exhibited at Christie's, where all the world flocked to see them, with other fine pictures of the modern school. It was just then a high tide of commercial prosperity, and Pactolus seemed to have been turned into the British Isles, and everybody, with the exception of an unimportant thirty million or so, had plenty of money, and, instructed by the high prices that ruled at the Gillott sale, made haste to invest it in pictures.

The sale of the Barker collection of pictures in 1874 showed that the old

masters did not share in the modern boom, and the sale of the fine collection of modern pictures made by Sam Mendel, of Manchester, was again noted for high prices. But in this way the summit was reached in the Quilter sale of water-colours, when some fine drawings of David Cox realised extraordinary prices. The "Hayfield," sold originally by David for fifty guineas, realised two thousand nine hundred and fifty pounds. In the same year, 1875, began the dispersion of the Blenheim treasures by the sale of the Marlborough gems. In the following year the top price was reached for a picture by an English master at the sale of the Wynn Ellis collection, when Gainsborough's famous portrait of the lovely Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire was sold for ten thousand one hundred guineas. A few days after the picture was cut from its canvas, and stolen from Messrs. Agnew's rooms in Bond Street, and nothing, as far as the public knows, has been heard of it since. The same sale was also notable for a curious dispute about a picture by Turner of the Temple of Jupiter, which was denounced as spurious, and some went so far as to say that Mr. Ellis had had the picture copied, the copy being now on sale, and sold the original to the Duke of Northumberland. The Duke undoubtedly had a fine picture of Turner's on the same subject, but there were differences, and it was clearly proved that the picture was a genuine one. But the doubts raised cast a kind of frost over the latter part of the sale.

Subsequent sales showed a decline more or less marked from the high-water mark previously reached. Finance magnates were selling instead of buying, and Albert Grant's gallery of modern paintings, intended for his palace at Kensington, but never hung—the palace itself, like Aladdin's, has vanished—was sold considerably under its cost. The great event of these latter years was the clearance of Hamilton Palace, when the treasured heirlooms of centuries were brought bodily up to the King Street rooms. Historic relics abounded, and former Dukes had also acquired a fine gallery of old masters. There was wonderful faience, too, jewels, lace—all the most precious things in the world were there, and the whole realised the respectable total of three hundred and ninety-seven thousand pounds.

Since that date some fine collections have come before the public. The Aston Rowant

gallery came to the hammer in 1883, when good but not extravagant prices ruled for modern pictures; the Fontaine collection, rich in majolica, was sold in the following year; and in 1885 occurred that magnificent sale—by private contract—of the Blenheim Raphael to the National Gallery for seventy thousand pounds. The rest of the Blenheim pictures found their way to Christie's in the following year. At the sale of the Graham collection in the same year, 1886, Gainsborough's "Sisters" sold for within a "pony" of ten thousand pounds, while at the sale of the rest of the Graham gallery in 1887, the Rothschilds acquired Boucher's "Madame de Pompadour" for ten thousand three hundred and ninety-five pounds. At the Knowles sale in the same year, Millais's "Over the Hills and Far Away" sold for five thousand two hundred and fifty pounds. There was a distinct drop in Coxes, and the "Hayfield" went for one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five pounds at the Fulbeck Hall sale, and in the following year the "Vale of Clwyd" had dropped to two thousand four hundred and fifteen pounds. But in 1891 Turner's "Walton Bridge" realised seven thousand four hundred and fifty-five pounds at the Bolckow sale, as against five thousand pounds at the dispersal of the Gillott collection.

And now if you would witness the dispersal of some famous art collection, to nowhere else than Christie's can you wend your way. The long line of carriages extending up and down form a measure of the fashionable nature of the function. The rooms are thronged, but not crowded. Smart people come and go, how d'ye do, shake hands, take off hats, recognise friends, stare, smile, simper, chatter about everything and nothing. Ladies arrange themselves in the carved oaken chairs—not without an eye to effect. The rustle of dresses, the faint fragrance of perfume, fill the air. But this is only the gilded frame of the picture. The business part of the show consists of an open quadrangle of tables covered with green baize, with the auctioneer's pulpit at the open end. This is the dealers' row, and is occupied by a solid phalanx of the order—stout men for the most part, with plenty of broadcloth expended on their garments, comfortable, easy-looking men, who exchange badinage in German and French, as well as in the vernacular of Stratford-atte-Bowe. Among the foreigners, per-

haps, is some dark-eyed boy—like Sâfel, in "Le Blocus," "la tête crépue et les yeux vifs comme un véritable écureuil"—who is writing for his round, alert-looking papa. That is the way to acquire a true knowledge of affairs—to begin early; the barren arts of mathematics or logic are nothing to the art of the dexterous dealer. But there are others who, catalogues in hand, are following the progress of the sale—smart young women; faultlessly-attired young men; old ladies, too, keen of beak and eagle-eyed; and faded-looking old gentlemen, who are yet capable of being warmed into life by a rare enamel of Limoges or a majolica dish.

When the sale opens, with all this crowd of witnesses holding the affair in full survey, and with the appearance in the rostrum of the president of the assembly, it is perhaps in the nature of an anticlimax when a little pot, about the size of an ordinary pepper-castor, is brought round by the porter—the man in the cap and apron—who must be an authority, too, upon bric-à-brac, so many pieces has he handled. He travels with it round the dealers' ring—we may call it a ring, though it is square, as is the prize-ring, for that matter—some little bit of Bow, or Chelsea, or Fulham, dear to the British collector, but caviare to him of Frankfort or of Paris. Then perhaps majolica comes in, and heavy Dutchmen stir and vivacious Frenchmen, at least a size broader than the Dutch, and the boy with the black eyes watches things calmly, but intently, and biddings mount up to hundreds of guineas.

But in course of time we come to the great piece of the day, something that nations thirst after and great collectors are wild to attain. The dealers rise from their chairs, and everybody cranes forward as the Henri Deux jug or François Premier enamel is borne carefully and tenderly round in its cradle lined with cotton wool. But everybody knows all about it, and veteran dealers salute it with their pencils, and whisper reminiscences of the previous sale long years ago, whether in London, Paris, Rome, or Vienna, where they first made its acquaintance. When the hum of expectation and interest has subsided, the president briefly addresses the assembly. He is not eloquent, his manner is calm and judicial, not persuasive. He has only to remark that here is a remarkable piece of work that would give distinction to any collection apart from its intrinsic value. And now what price Henri or François?

Sprung at a thousand the ball rolls gaily on—it is something of a distinction to have made a bid for this remarkable piece—and so in full cry all round the biddings run on by hundreds without a check, without a break. By degrees the pack tail off, but it is still ding-dong among two or three leaders; at last only one, like Fitzjames's hound.

And now the hammer comes down as swiftly and decisively as if the affair were of a guinea or two instead of some thousands of these obsolete but still popular coins. Crack! for Henri Deux, captured by the Germans like his papa François. Why, this is worse than Pavia! Some one tries to raise a round of applause; but it dies away. Why cheer when our favourite pots are captured by the stern invader?

When pictures are selling, the scene is rather different; we have rows of seats disposed before the rostrum as in a lecture-room, while the pictures are stacked against the walls in arcades of green-baize. The light shines from above on the golden frames of the pictures, on the auctioneer and his assistants, on the assemblage of hats of every shape and form, with here or there some stray feminine headgear. The faces about are mostly bearded and well lined with wrinkles; the whole assemblage is a serious one, yet not without enthusiasm on the part of the non-buyers. Often some well-known picture elicits cheers, further approbation at the first thousand, more encouragement at the second, and quite an ovation as the hammer falls. The great dealers are all there, you may be sure; the representatives of the national collections, home and foreign, a Duke or two, perhaps, and a few enthusiasts in the way of millionaires, although such people generally buy through accredited dealers.

And in this fashion our great private collections melt away, and those that succeed them are still more fleeting and temporary. But public galleries grow and continue to grow. And there is one un-failing means that may be recommended to our great historic houses by which they may preserve their collections from falling under the auctioneer's hammer. Let them give their treasures to the nation, or to some one of the great cities in our midst. Artists can make such sacrifices—witness the Turner Gallery, and in our own days Sir John Gilbert's generous gifts—and in that way our great nobles and men of wealth may raise for themselves monuments more enduring than brass.

PAUDHEEN RHU.

AN IRISH SKETCH.

PADDY MEEHAN was a local institution. The town of Carrigmagrone, with its twelve hundred and three inhabitants, regarded Paddy Meehan—or, as he was called by all the country, Paudheen Rhu, or Red Paddy, as much because of his rubicund countenance as for the redness of his hair—as its special property. Nothing loth, Paddy returned the compliment, and professed that Carrigmagrone and all its people revolved on the axis of his individuality. In fact, he had come to think that, if through the force of any circumstances he were to be separated from Carrigmagrone or its people, it and they would, in his own phrase, “go to rack and ruin.”

Paddy was the town-crier, and loved to hear his treble ring along the four streets of the town—in which he was not born. Thereby hung a mystery, for nobody knew whence Paddy came. He had grave misgivings on the subject himself. He had assimilated himself to the people of Carrigmagrone and their condition so completely, and absorbed their notions so fully, that the place of his birth was altogether eliminated from his memory. All that the Carrigmagrone folk knew of Paddy was that he came; at what particular time or whence none could quite say. He put himself very much in evidence, and the people submitted quietly. Besides being town-crier he was also the local fire brigade. When a chimney was on fire, Paddy was on the spot with a wet sack to stop the draught up the flue, and let the soot smoulder out. When a fire assumed more alarming proportions, Paddy would be seen on the roof of the burning premises, or on some other vantage point, hauling up buckets of water—the hose and steam-engine were unknown in Carrigmagrone—and emptying their contents on the flames. On one occasion the fire proved too much for Paddy. It was the house of a gombeen man, or petty usurer, which “succumbed to the devouring element.”

“Mihul Mather’s burnin’ proved too much for you, entirely,” remarked a sympathetic policeman to Paddy the next day.

“See here, sargint, jewel,” replied Paddy, all-confident in his powers of extinguishing any mundane conflagration, “I don’t mind tellin’ you; I’m not afeard of douging any nath’ral fire; but when you have th’ould boy pokin’ up the blazes, as

I seen him in Mihuleen Mather’s house, what can a poor morthial like me do? It would take the whole rigiment of constabulary to put him an’ the fire out at wanst.”

But Paddy’s versatility was not limited by the avocations indicated. He was also the bill-poster of the district. In addition he was water-carrier of the town, supplying his customers with fresh spring water—conveyed in a huge barrel on a donkey-cart from a well a mile outside—every morning at so much a gallon. Further, he held an undisturbed monopoly of the window-cleaning of Carrigmagrone, and was employed by all the country round for the conveyance of special or particular messages. At fairs and markets he was ready for any odd job that might turn up, and on such occasions might be seen leading a horse on a trot for the inspection of an intending purchaser with as much unction and capering as if he were the vendor; or branding a cow with as much decision and impressiveness as if he had purchased the animal.

Paddy lived, or rather slept, in a loft which stood over a coach-house in a lane-way abutting the principal street, or “Market Square,” as it figured in civic nomenclature. He reached his nocturnal abode by means of iron pegs driven into the wall, and no one was known to have ever seen the inside of Paddy’s “mansion in the skies.” Strange to relate, he also was never known to have fallen while ascending his improvised staircase. In the absence of reception-rooms, he greeted his friends in the streets, and entertained them in the local tap-rooms. It was never difficult to find Paddy.

Paddy’s age was indefinable. He seemed to be any age from thirty to fifty—according to the light in which he was viewed. He was a low-sized, wiry man, and always looked clean. He wore a low, flat-crowned hat, which once might have been black, but no one could remember when it was other than a blue-green; a huge white and blue muffler arranged in a cravat hid the presence or concealed the absence of a shirt; he sported a faded brown velvet shooting-jacket; tweed knee-breeches and a pair of coachmen’s boots with the tops off, and well worn, completed his costume. As to external ornaments they were comprised in a huge hunting-watch attached to a leather string which held a dog-whistle at the other end. “Paddy’s thether,” as it was denominated, extended across his chest

from outer pocket to outer pocket. In his hand he usually carried a well-seasoned ash-plant, as old, the local folk said, as Paddy himself, and as inseparable from him as his right hand.

One bleak November evening Paddy, as usual, was on the look-out near the hotel for the "mail car" from Ballynina, the nearest railway town, which was due at half-past five. The rain came down in a slow, thick drizzle. Nothing but the dull hiss of its fall disturbed the silence of the streets, which could only be perceived by the dim, smoky flare of the oil-lamps that hung at intervals along the houses.

"Well, an' it's a grand night for those that like it," remarked Paddy to the ostler standing in the entrance to the hotel yard awaiting the arrival of the "mail car," "but by my sowkins I'd want to be a potheen 'stiller hidin' from the gaugers to have any regards for such weather at this time of the evenin'. Look at it now, man. It's dhroppin' down in floods of tears, as if 'twor sorry it didn't do so afore."

"You don't seem to mind it very much, Paddy," interjected the ostler.

"In throth it makes little difference to me, Thady. If the sun shines I'm happy, an' if it doesn't I'm not displased. Shure there's no use in grumblin', as my mother said whin she hit the ould sow a wallop for eatin' her Sunday cloak. More be token that pig never recovered——"

"The blow, Paddy?"

"No, in throth, but the cloak; for she et the neck chain of it, and it gave her the mailes and they took her off before her time, poor thing, just like Tommy Malone's bull."

"What happened him, Paddy?" asked the ostler.

"Well, you see," responded Paddy, rubbing his chin, "'twas just this way. That same bull was a terror. Wan couldn't go within an acre of him. He wor a young bull and a good wan too. Bat wan day, howsomever, ould Miss Julia Bannon, the ladies' school taycher, wor walkin' thro' the fields an', widout knowin' where she was goin', got into his paddock. Whin the bull sees her he makes a rush, and she has only time to dart back through the open sheep stile through which she cum. The bull couldn't turn as quick as Miss Julia, nor shtop himself so aisy, and like a boult of lightnin' he makes for the gap slantwise an' got shtuck in it. It isn't well known whether 'twor the sight of Miss Julia levanting across the field for

her life or not that killed him, but he wor found shtone-dead wid a crik in his neck, an' it broken. But whisht! here's the mail coach, an' only wan passenger on it."

"Aisy, sir, aisy!" exclaimed Paddy to the "wan" passenger who was dismounting from the long car which Paddy described as the "mail coach," and as the former was about stepping down into a pool of water on the road: "Aisy, sir, or you're into a lough, or maybe the heavy rain has knocked the bottom out of it, and you'd find yourself goin' down to Australya quicker than you'd come up. Here you are, sir! Jump off here on teray formay, as the town clerk says," and Paddy directed the passenger's attention to the paved sidewalk.

"That same man's a foriner," said Paddy to the driver, as the passenger passed into the hotel, having jumped off the car without going down to "Australya."

"Musha, I dunno," replied the driver. "The sorra word he spoke since we left Ballynina."

"Shure, I'll sware he is," said Paddy. "Them foriners always wears a big cothamore, wid the collar turned up to their nose, and a big soft hat wid the rim down to their chin, as if the wind would give them appleplix. An' shure they don't spake in anythin' but outlandish French or Rooshin. Sorra bit of me 'ud like to go a hen's race in the dark wid wan o' them folk. They're all conspayrithurs, they are."

"I say, Paddy, d'ye want a job?" broke out the waiter from the hotel door. "This gentleman wants to be dhruiven over to Mount Ellen, an' Tommy Tobin the dhriver is bad with rheumatics, and can't go out to-night."

"To the Hermit's!" ejaculated Paddy. "Not for all the money in the bank would I go out there to-night. Shure, there's nothin' but avil sperets there; an' on sich a night as this they'd come on ye altogether unawares in the dark avenue. Not for all the money——"

"He says he'll give ye ten shillins," interrupted the waiter again. "He wants to go there bad."

"An' I don't want to go there, good or bad——"

"Fifteen shillins he says, Paddy. Don't be a fool, man! 'Tisn't often ye get fifteen shillins for five miles of a drive."

"Well, he's a very persavarin' man, an' I suppose if I must, I must, if there's no

one else to do it. An' if he did it himself, the horse wouldn't understand his lingo an' 'ud run away. It's money down, isn't it?" whispered Paddy enquiringly to the waiter. "I don't like foriners, an' I'd as lave be paid aforehand by thim."

Paddy and his doubted fare were soon on their way to Mount Ellen. This was the mansion of Leopold Armytage Harding, "The Hermit," as he was called, because of his recluseness. A man of middle age, reported to be stern of character, disliking the world generally, and being disliked by the local world, where he was regarded with suspicion and distrust because of what were styled his "dark" ways, and because the sources of his income, which maintained a large mansion to which but little land was attached, were unknown.

On the way Paddy endeavoured to draw the "black stranger" into conversation, but all his interrogatories and commentaries were met with merely a turn of the head, and what he thought was a gaze that seemed to enquire how he dared to speak uninvited.

The entrance gate was reached, and they had proceeded some paces up the avenue, when Paddy was startled—so startled that he involuntarily brought the horse to a standstill—on hearing in clear, hard tones from his passenger the exclamation:

"I shall get down here and walk up. You may go back!" suiting the action to the words, and jumping off the car, leaving Paddy gazing, as far as the darkness would permit, in astonishment after the retreating figure.

The next morning Carrigmagrone was convulsed on learning that the Hermit of Mount Ellen had been found dead in his study, stabbed down through the left shoulder. The "black stranger," whose passing through Carrigmagrone the previous evening was largely canvassed, was immediately associated with the crime, and the police expected to bring the murderer to book immediately.

Paddy was, of course, the first to hear the news. In fact, he met the errand-boy from Mount Ellen on his way to inform the police, and before the good folk of his adopted town could recover from their consternation, or the police could bring to an end their cross-questioning of the errand-boy, who knew nothing beyond the fact of the murder, Paddy was well on his way to the scene of the tragedy.

Arrived there he was admitted to the

study, and saw the body sitting rigidly in a large chair, the dagger still fixed a little in front of the middle line of the left shoulder, and near the neck, the line of the hilt forming an angle with the line of the neck.

Paddy was naturally awestruck at the sight. Almost mechanically he approached the body, his eyes fixed on the dagger-head which protruded over the shoulder. The handle was silvered and the guards of the hilt were carved. Paddy was fascinated by this dagger. He seemed, as he afterwards related, to take in every detail, but could not speak a word. There was no indication of a struggle. Everything around was undisturbed. But Paddy saw a small piece of jagged skin, a fleshy particle, adhering to one of the curves of the hilt guard. The hand that perpetrated the foul deed must have been excoriated. Paddy rushed out of the room and stood gasping at the hall door. The ghastly sight and the fact that he had discovered a clue excited him almost to frenzy. He remained outside the door until the police came, and then after following them through all the details of their tedious investigation of the surroundings, he left towards evening, and went on his way home.

Paddy had travelled about half the distance back when he was accosted by a tall, loosely-built old woman, whose grey hair, all dishevelled, gathered wildly out from beneath the shawl which partly covered her head and drooped over her shoulder.

"Is that you, Peggy Diskin?" ejaculated Paddy.

"It's me, Paudh, an' I'm glad to see ye. I'm waitin' for ye. Yer wanted at me cabin. Winnie's there."

"What! Winnie Malone is it you mane?" exclaimed Paddy.

"Troth, an' it is, poor colleen. She's wid me since her shame came on her; an' now she's dyin'. She wanted you—an' whisper, Paddy—she says you were kind to her poor ould father at the time of his 'viction, an' she knows you're good at heart, an' wants you to look after her little boy—only born a while ago."

"Is it ravin' you are, woman?" cried out Paddy. "Sure you don't mane to say that Winnie Malone has come to misfortune? The sweet, innocent little girl that I often dangled on me knee! Tare an' ages, woman, you're mad."

"No, Paddy, agra, I'm not mad; an' sore's the day for poor Winnie, the

dacentest, honestest colleen that ever lived; an' the villain that——"

"Do you know who he is?" demanded Paddy fiercely.

"Felix Synnott."

"What? The Hermit's steward?"

"Yis."

"Well, if ever I lay hand on him—an' although he has levanted to America his ruination will follow him—I'll—— But," broke in Paddy in the midst of his threat of vengeance, "let's be quick. The poor girl is all alone an' she dyin', glory be to Heaven this night. Hurry on, Peggy."

Paddy entered Peggy Diskin's humble abode, a lone, small cottage lying hidden in a large grove; formerly a shepherd's hut in which Diskin lived, and where his widow remained. In an inner room was a bed on which lay a beautiful young girl seemingly asleep, her thick golden hair spread out on the coarse but clean white sheet, and forming a bright aureole round the face, whose cheeks were flushed with two pinky spots that indicated the fever. Her eyes opened as Paddy entered. She seemed to recognise him and to smile. Paddy's heart "rushed up into his throat," and he stood hesitatingly near the door. The girl raised her hand gently up as if to beckon Paddy to come near. As she did so, Paddy nearly shrieked aloud. He saw that the under portion of her hand had been rudely torn. He felt then that he knew who was the betrayer of poor Winnie Malone, and also knew who had stabbed the Hermit of Mount Ellen to death with his own dagger.

Many of the good folk of Carrigmagrone will aver that the Hermit was done to death by the "ould boy" in the guise of the "black stranger"; but Paddy is in the possession of a black wig and beard which would indicate that recluses may sometimes appear in public under a disguise.

CONCERNING KNOCKERS.

WHEN or by whom the knocker was invented, we have found it impossible to ascertain. There is no reference to it in any of the British Museum papyri; nor do we find it figured on the Egyptian monuments. It was probably an evolution of comparatively recent times. So long as men dwelt in tents, to which admission was gained by the simple process of drawing aside a curtain, knockers, it is evident,

were not required. When they began to build themselves houses for the sake of greater privacy, more domestic enjoyment, or, perhaps, of security, no doubt some means of communication with the world without was found desirable; and a slave or domestic was stationed on the threshold to receive all comers. In the Roman vestibule an intruder was warned off by the device of a mosaic figure of a dog let into the pavement, with the legend "Cave canem"—Beware of the dog!—a warning not unknown in our own days and country. At houses where no porter was kept a caller probably made known his presence by the application of his fists, his feet, or his stick to the wooden or iron door. In the colder regions of Europe, and in countries exposed to "the shocks of war" or the raids of robbers, when a stout and massive gate or door was necessary as a protection and a defence, the visitor must have experienced no little difficulty in making himself known. When the Black Knight, in "Ivanhoe," discovered in the forest glade the hermitage of Friar Tuck, he had to assail its door with the butt of his lance in order to arouse attention and gain admittance. When a knightly company approached the castle of a brother knight, they seem always to have wound a horn as a kind of "Open Sesame!" But as society settled down and law and order spread their influence over the community, it is obvious that the want of some more facile and convenient mode of communication between the outsiders and the insiders would be more and more keenly felt; and such a want was sure to be sooner or later supplied. If any antiquarian authority should select the twelfth century as the period in which the knocker became a fact, we should feel no disposition to gainsay him. In its earlier stages we can well believe that it was much more useful than handsome, and that the chief object of its designer was to ensure that its reverberations should be distinctly audible. Probably it owed its artistic developments to the good taste of the workers in metal in the great Flemish cities; where, to this day, may be seen many a striking example of original design and effective workmanship in the knocker.

The doors of our old abbeys and religious houses were furnished with knockers of ample size—like the "brazen nose" knocker from which, it is said, a certain famous college at Oxford takes its name—so that their sounds rang through

court and corridor, carrying conviction to all within their reach. In romantic stories we often read of the dismal sensations caused by such formidable echoes in troublous times—when, for all the poor monks knew, the knocking might be that of a King's messenger, with an imperious demand for a new benevolence; or of a neighbouring Baron's steward, with an angry complaint of the trespassing of the monastic cattle. In the towns every burgher's house was equipped with the useful knocker, its dimensions and adornment being regulated by the burgher's social pretensions. Huge was the knocker suspended to the city gate, which many a proud mediæval city, on the coming of its sovereign or over-lord, would close in assertion of its feudal privileges, nor open it until, after assiduous application at the knocker, those privileges had been recognised. Our readers will remember that, down to a comparatively recent date, a similar ceremonial was observed at Temple Bar on the occasion of a Royal visit to London City.

In the drama and in fiction excellent use has often been made of the knocker. We bethink ourselves of a powerful modern novel in which the hero is saved from the commission of a great crime by a sudden knocking at the door—and the arrival of his aunt from the country. Inexhaustible amusement, too, has been derived from the way in which different people handle it—some shyly and furtively, some aggressively, some plausibly, some ostentatiously, others almost supplicatingly. All this belongs to the physiology of knocking, which might well bear scientific exposition. But as to the electric bell, it has no physiology! The pressure on the knob is meaningless—the work of a moment; it elicits no scintillation of a man's personality. You may press a score of knobs without any self-revelation, whereas your mode of handling a single knocker would expose you to a keen observer. So it comes to pass that the effect of a knocker is worth careful study. The jangle of a bell provokes the hearer to drop into bad language—and that is all. One never hears of a man's deeper emotions being roused by a door-bell; but with a knocker it is very much otherwise! Its "note" is distinctly one of remembrance. You cannot forget it; the sound lives long in your memory, as Shelley says of the odour of the violet, and recalls the circumstances under which you heard it.

Thus, in "Macbeth," after Duncan's murder, the guilty Thane and his not less guilty wife are disturbed by a sudden knocking.

"Whence is that knocking?" cries Macbeth; "wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!"

And, afterwards, when Lady Macbeth is in her somnambulistie trance, she remembers that ominous sound:

"To bed, to bed! there's knocking at the gate!"

There is this further to be said about the knocker, that it connected itself with a man's personality in so intimate a way as strongly and clearly to make it known to others. We sat in our drawing-room or library, and said to each other: "That is Lord Verisopht's knock!" "That must be Montague Tigg; I know his knock!" "That is papa's knock, dear!" In the old days such instances of the transference of the human personality to the knocker were very general. It is curious, but true, that whole classes and professions of men were formerly distinguished by a characteristic use of the knocker. There was the imperious and far-resounding knock of James de la Pluche as representative of Lady Bareacres. There was the smart application of Captain Sabretache. There was the insinuating knock of Dr. Squilla. There was the dignified and ecclesiastical knock of Bishops, Deans, and Archdeacons; and the grave and measured, yet less dignified, knock of clergy below the archidiaconal grade. Of course there was also the well-known double knock, the rapid rat-tat of Her Majesty's letter-carriers—a sound full of import, on which some of our best writers have descanted with affecting sentiment and pathetic eloquence—which, moreover, has been celebrated by the sister arts of Poesy and Music!

Finally, not a little might be said on the æsthetic side of our subject; on the variety of form and ornament in the knocker, and its adaptability to the wants of different social grades. What a contrast, for instance, between the stately and even pompous knocker that adorned the aristocratic doorways in Belgravia—fashioned, perhaps, like a lion's or a griffin's head—solid, weighty, imposing; and the ugly bit of rusty iron, with a knob at the end of it, which hung suspended on the narrow doors of, let us say, "Stratford-atte-Bowe"! A considerable amount of ingenuity and fancy was at one time expended on this useful appliance; and

not infrequently the design attained a high standard of artistic excellence. This, perhaps, was the reason why, in bygone days, young noblemen and others afflicted with the collector's mania, made nocturnal expeditions in order to get together the largest possible number of specimens. To such a mode of procedure exception might justly be taken on the score of morality; but, as inspired by a love of art, it seems scarcely to call for severe condemnation. Alas! before the aggression of the electric bell the knocker is so rapidly and generally disappearing, that no fine examples will be left for the future collector, in however scrupulous a manner he may wish to acquire them.

"OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL.

CHAPTER XIII.

BETWEEN one and two that night Gilbert Egerton went into the hall. He had changed his dress-coat for a smoking-jacket, but though he had retired to his own rooms two hours ago, he had made no preparations to go to rest. The house had been shut up rather earlier than usual that night, the change for the better in Mr. Egerton's condition giving the whole household a sense of relief. By this time every one, with the exception of the patient and his night-watchers, was in bed.

Gilbert had resolved to speak to his brother. But before seeking him in the underground chamber, cut off from sight and sound of the house, he went first to see if Wilfred should be again playing in his fool's masquerade in the house itself, where, though all the occupants were fast asleep, still, at a sound, should their help be needed, they would come hastening. There was a curious livid pallor about his mouth. It was brought there by the thought of a possible meeting with his brother, in the loneliness of the night in that isolated, underground prison-house, with no other human soul near to act as a check on the passions that meeting would call into play.

In his heart was a horrible doubt of his own powers of self-control. Instinctively he sheltered himself under the sense of restraint given by even the sleeping presence of those other people.

The house, downstairs, except where here and there the moonlight fell through

a window, was in darkness. He carried no light, not wishing to be seen by any other member of the household who might by accident be up. He divined that Wilfred would probably keep to that portion of the house which was said to have been more particularly haunted by the ghost-monk. The brutal callousness of the whole affair sickened while it enraged him. That his brother should have chosen to screen himself under such a guise—at this time of all others—seemed incredible.

Apart from the folly and risk of frightening a set of silly, ignorant, and already over-excited servants, to deliberately choose, when his father lay at the point of death, the fantastic guise worn, according to superstitious tradition, by the old harbinger of death, was as cruel as it was base. At least, if his imprisonment had become unendurable, he might have found some other mode of enjoying a temporary freedom.

But why should he enter the house at all? Why should he not have remained satisfied with the brief night visits into the grounds near his hiding-place, which, ever since he had been strong enough, they had agreed he might take, with proper precautions?

But even this had been at a terrible risk to all concerned, not only to himself but to those who were sheltering him.

Gilbert reached the archway through which the corridor leading from his own suite of rooms merged into the great centre hall. The moonlight fell through an oriel window facing him, but the side by which he entered was in darkness.

A figure in armour stood inside the hall, near the archway. As he reached it he suddenly remembered something.

That afternoon, while he and Hope and his mother sat at tea in the hall, Hope had in jest taken a white rose from her belt and fastened it into the coat of mail.

The armour had been worn by one of their ancestors, and it was said that he had loved and wooed a lady at Court who had promised him that if she ever learned to care for him in return, she would give him a white rose. But she carried her pride and coquetry too far. He was assassinated one night by a rival, and the white rose never came to him. The story was a favourite one of Hope's, and the white roses she was wearing that afternoon recalled it to her.

"Perhaps the rose wasn't worth waiting for, after all, if he had only known!" she

said, glancing up at the armed figure. "I dare say she was horrid, and vain, and proud. But I like to think, too, that she might have grown different when she learned at last to care for him. For I am sure she did. Such faithfulness as his must have conquered in the end, and if they had not murdered him the rose would have come to him after all. I will give him one now, so if his ghost walks to-night, he will think she put it there."

Gilbert Egerton raised his hand now in the darkness, and took the rose from his dead ancestor's coat of mail.

"His faithfulness must have conquered in the end." He repeated her words dully to himself. "I do not care!" and the fire burst up in his heart again. "I will win her, if I die for it!"

As he flung out his hand with a fierce gesture, he accidentally struck the armour, jarring it, and causing it to make a faint clanking sound, which in the deep stillness of the night echoed through the hall.

A figure waiting at the foot of the staircase, in the deeper shadow cast by a cluster of tall palms and ferns, started and turned in the direction of the archway.

As Gilbert, still only dimly seen in the darkness, advanced into the hall, the figure by the staircase swiftly raised its arm. But as Gilbert passed into the moonlight the figure, cowed and cloaked, stepped noiselessly out of the shadows, and moved towards him.

"It's rash of you coming on a fellow without warning," said the deep musical voice, and Wilfred Egerton significantly raised his hand again. It held a revolver. "In my unlucky position I can't always wait to see first who it is. It's a shooting 'at sight' between Dornton and me."

Gilbert looked at his brother, speechless for a second.

A patch of moonshine lay on the floor where they stood, and in the luminous dusk they could see each other's faces. It struck Gilbert that the ghost-monk might have presented some such appearance to human eyes as Wilfred Egerton did. The pale face, the cowl casting a deeper shadow on the dark, wicked eyes, might have been those of the old monk himself, condemned by tradition to expiate his sins on the spot where the monastery in which he had committed sacrilege once stood.

"I came to prevent you playing the fool," Gilbert said hoarsely. "If you have no respect for our father, whom you have perhaps driven to death, nor thought for

the suffering of our mother, you might at least think of the risk you are bringing on us all by the chattering of the servants."

A curious look crossed Wilfred's face.

"I am beginning to think that even a brush with Dornton would be welcome as a break to the deathly dreariness of that underground hole," he said.

But he had lowered his voice, and he gave a quick glance up in the direction of the gallery.

He made a movement which necessitated his brother turning, so that he stood with his back almost to it.

"It comes well from you to speak of it like that!" said Gilbert very bitterly. "You seem to forget how others endure it for your sake. Heaven help them!" raising his voice a little in his excitement.

Wilfred cast a quick glance at his brother.

"It is very good of them," he said slowly, in the same subdued tone, "a good deal more than I deserve, you are thinking, and you are quite right. But Miss Brown is an angel."

Gilbert made a threatening step forward.

"It's about her, too, I want to warn you," he said in a choked voice. "If you forget that she is my father's guest, and amuse yourself at her expense, and cost her even so much as a day's heartache, I shall make it my business to see that you render account of it."

As they stood the moonlight touched Gilbert's face, while Wilfred's, darkened further by the monk's cowl, was in shadow. He looked at his brother for a second.

"Even should I have any intention of aspiring to win Miss Brown," he said in his deep, slow tones, "you seem to forget that Mr. Brown himself would have to be taken into consideration. And knowing him as I do, he would certainly not consider me a fit match for his daughter," and he laughed slightly.

"And he would be right. She had better marry an honest man on the other side of the counter, any day, than a blackguard like you!"

Mrs. Page's suggestion rankled like a poisoned dart in his heart. The enigmatical smile on his brother's lips, the dark eyes watching him from under the cowl, goaded him out of all self-control.

Something devilish in its mockery flashed from Wilfred's eyes. But he still spoke so that his tones should not be caught by any possible listening ears in the silent house.

"I am sorry if I am interfering between you and any intentions you may have in the matter yourself. Miss Brown would make even a suitable wife for a Gilbert Egerton."

"Not if you had made love to her first. Miss Brown is no fit wife for me if she has listened willingly to one love-word from you!"

The words cut like the flash of a steel blade through the stillness and silence that reigned in the hall, reaching the gallery above, where, as they struck her a dumb, inarticulate cry—the agony of a woman's shame and anger—broke from Hope, who stood concealed behind a marble statue near the head of the staircase.

Wilfred Egerton looked away from his brother for a second, then he turned back to him.

"You villain!" he said in a hard, hoarse voice, which he troubled no longer to suppress.

For another second Gilbert stared back at him stupidly. The cold, white fury that had possessed him a moment before had died out suddenly, killed by the brutality of his own speech.

Then he turned on his heel and walked away.

Wilfred, standing in the moonshine that fell through the oriel window into the hall, a strange, incongruous figure, touched by the old monk dress with a suggestion of mystery, looked after him till he disappeared through the archway.

That his own position was full of danger, standing as he was distinctly outlined against the darker background; that their voices, particularly Gilbert's, incautiously raised as it had been in his rage, might have attracted attention, did not stir his pulses into quicker beating. Physical fear he did not know. He waited till his quick ear caught a faint sound from the gallery above. Then he turned and walked towards the staircase. But before he could reach it Hope had stepped out of her hiding-place and vanished down the gallery.

Perhaps she made some little half-unconscious sign to him as she crossed the head of the staircase. It was darker up there than in the hall, and she was but a dimly-defined shape herself in the gloom. But it seemed to him that she made a half-appealing gesture to him from the head of the staircase, and he obeyed it.

She would not keep the tryst they had

made that night. In a spirit of girlish mischief and daring, half-frightened at the recklessness of it, but yielding at last to the risk for the sake of relieving the tedium of his miserable imprisonment, she had consented to meet him that night, in the hall, as soon as the rest of the household had retired.

She did not know that this was the third visit which he had already paid to the house. She had conscientiously remonstrated with him, but he had laughed at her fears for his safety. He had told her that if she wished it he would raise the old ghost-monk, who had formerly haunted the house, for her special benefit.

She had just arrived on the scene when Gilbert had appeared.

Wilfred Egerton was disappointed. He had needed Hope's assistance in a little plot which he desired to carry out for his own escape and future welfare. He was growing tired of waiting for his brother's aid. Besides, the conditions, whatever they were, attached to his help would certainly be unwelcome.

For the moment his own plans were baffled, and he went back to his underground prison, his face pale with the malignant despair and baffled rage that might once have looked out of the eyes of the monk who was said to have sold his soul to the devil, and after the fashion of such one-sided transactions, lost the game.

"She won't give me the chance again!" he said.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was true. Rude and hateful as the shock of the awakening had been, it still opened Hope's eyes to the folly to which she had committed herself. It was a different thing going by the sanction and wish of his mother to visit the prisoner, and help to cheer his solitude. But to assist him in such mad recklessness as this, to make clandestine meetings with him in the dead of night, to run the risk herself of being discovered with him at such a time, was a different matter. She wondered, as she lay miserably awake for the rest of the night, how she could ever have thought of such a thing.

In the way in which he had put it, it had seemed, with the exception of the great risk he himself ran, nothing but an amusing and exciting adventure.

The fierce passion of Gilbert, his coarse brutality of speech, seemed to have transformed a half-childish freak into an unmaidenly thing.

She hated herself and him, and Wilfred, as she lay sleepless in the dark with wide, burning eyes. It was her first experience of personal shame, her first acquaintance with the evil interpretation the world can give to an innocent act.

No! She did not hate Wilfred Egerton. Wicked as he may have been, he had never once made her feel like this. It was his very gentleness of courtesy which had removed all self-consciousness from her.

She would have met him to-night as frankly and simply as she would have met her brother.

After to-night—her cheeks flushed scarlet in the darkness. How could she face him again?

And, perhaps—why—he might be despising her, too, for having consented to such an adventure. He might think her hoydenish, unwomanly. Suddenly this thought seemed to her more intolerable than any that had gone before.

With a stifled cry she buried her face in the pillows. But slowly into her self-tormentings a new faith in Wilfred Egerton grew up, bringing her a vague comfort. It was founded on the courteous respect he had always shown her, on his gentleness and kindness.

He would not despise her, knowing as he must do that she had acted only in innocence, silly though her conduct had been. He, too, had seen no harm in the escapade. Only Gilbert—if he had discovered her there! How she hated him! She fell asleep at last and dreamed of the wicked ghost-monk. She thought she was in the picture gallery. It was night, and she was there all alone. Down the centre of the gallery lay a broad streak of ghastly, livid-looking light. She could not tell where it came from, nor did it seem to lighten any other part of the gallery except that broad line down the centre of the polished floor, radiating with a pale illumination into the air. A few feet above it the darkness was so thick, that it seemed to hang like a funeral pall between that ghostly light and the picture-lined walls.

And as she stood at one end of the gallery, just at the point where the livid light was blotted out in strange and dreadful suddenness by the surrounding blackness, she saw a brown-cloaked and cowed figure, walking towards her from the farther end down that path of light.

She could see it distinctly, even to the girdle of knotted cord round the waist.

But the head was bent, and the cowl drawn over it hid the face completely from her sight.

Half-mad with fear, for in her dream she seemed to know that if the dead monk touched her she would be his for ever, she tried to fly and could not stir. But the cowed figure stopped within a yard or two from her and raised his head. And she saw the face of Wilfred Egerton, white and worn, with the dreadful sadness in his burning eyes.

"I love you," he said, in the deep sweet tones that could stir her as no human voice had ever yet moved her. "But you do not love me. You had the chance of redeeming my soul, and you failed me. You held the key of my salvation in your hand, and flung it away—and now—it is too late. See!"

And as she looked, she saw that the light had faded behind him, and that the horrible thick darkness was closing in on him on every side, till his figure was only dimly outlined in that strange ghastly gleam that seemed now to emanate in some mysterious way from his own personality.

And as he slowly faded from her sight the spell that held her speechless, powerless, was broken, and with a cry she sprang forward towards the place where he stood, and she awoke. She opened her eyes to see the summer morning sunlight falling into her room, and Sophie, Mrs. Egerton's maid, who was attending on her in the absence of her own, stood by her bedside with the early morning tea.

"Mais, mademoiselle! But you must have been dreaming horrid!" exclaimed the French maid, in the odd mixture of French and perverted English idiom on which she prided herself. "You had the look of one horriblement frightened while you was sleeping."

"I was 'horriblement' frightened!" said the girl, as she passed her handkerchief across her brow, on which the pretty straying curls of hair lay damp from the clammy moisture which had gathered there. And as she drank her tea, her mind went over the dream with its queer, grotesque confusion of the events and ideas of the previous evening.

When the maid left the room, she felt under her pillow for the key that was hidden there. It was safe; but its touch brought the scarlet flush to her cheeks again.

She would have to take back the key to its usual place, in Mrs. Egerton's

dressing-room. It would be awkward if it were missed before she had replaced it.

It belonged to the picture gallery, which was locked every night, because there was a communication between it and Mr. Egerton's study below, in which stood his strong safe. The communication was a portion of the secret staircase leading to the priest's room.

Since Mr. Egerton's illness, the picture gallery had not been opened every day, and the key could be taken from the dressing-room with less risk of being missed.

Hope, at Wilfred's jesting instigation, had taken the key the previous evening, and had brought it with her when she came to meet him. They were to visit the picture gallery, which had been a favourite walk of the ghost-monk, while, when the moon was in a certain position, there was a curious effect of light and shade on one of the old family portraits to be seen, and with which Hope, as yet, had never been able to make acquaintance, the moon till now not having been favourable. The portrait, dark and indistinct with age, was that of the knight to whom the white rose had never come. As the moonlight touched the lips at a certain angle, they seemed to smile.

Hope could not help feeling a little amusement now, as she thought over the queer fantasy which evidently had woven the idea of the picture-gallery key into the harsh, despairing reproach of Wilfred Egerton in her dream.

But when, on her way downstairs to breakfast, she slipped into Mrs. Egerton's dressing-room, to replace the key unseen by any one, the intended adventure, which she had at first thought of as an innocent secret, again took a tinge of unpleasantness.

"It really almost feels as if I had been helping in a burglary," she said, half-angry, half-smiling, and still very much ashamed, as she went on her way downstairs. "And it all comes of making mysteries about nothing. Really, I can't see why Mr. Wilfred should have told me not to let any one know that we were going on such an absurd adventure! And I am sure I don't know why I was so silly as to bind myself by unnecessary promises. Only I seem now to be promising things before I know what I have done."

The thought of facing Gilbert, even though he had no idea that she had overheard his speech, was intolerable.

Happily he had breakfasted, and she

and Mrs. Egerton were alone. Mrs. Egerton looked brighter than she had done for some time. Mr. Egerton still maintained the improvement of yesterday.

"And Gilbert's friend has returned to England, and everything will soon be arranged now, I think," she said to Hope. "And, my dear, I am afraid we have been selfish, and allowed you to be too much in that dreary underground place. You must not go there at all to-day; you are looking quite pale. You must keep out of doors all day."

Hope was glad enough not to have to face Wilfred Egerton.

After breakfast she started to walk to Eason's cottage. She had been several times to enquire after him, and to take some little extra dainty to tempt his appetite.

He was well cared for, and his niece came up every day to fetch what was needed, or else some one went from the house to the cottage.

Mrs. Page had taken it into her head that the niece was something of a gossip, and had begun to object to her coming so much to the house.

As Hope was passing through the chase she caught sight of Gilbert Egerton coming towards her. There was an imperceptible pause on both sides, then they advanced simultaneously. It would have been difficult to find a prettier picture that morning than Hope Brown, as she passed through summer sunlight and shadow under the green foliage of the trees.

The young man advancing to meet her was conscious of her fairness and sweetness in every nerve and heart-throb. She had flushed crimson on seeing him, but she was pale enough when they met, and had not he been too blinded by the consciousness of her beauty and winsomeness, he might have read danger in the set, proud mouth, and disdain in the grey eyes. But he saw nothing—only that she was fair, and the one woman who could satisfy his heart and soul.

He noticed with keen remorse and trouble that she had grown thinner and more delicate-looking.

"Good morning," he said; "are you going as far as Eason's cottage? Let me carry that basket, it is too heavy for you on such a hot morning."

It only contained fruit. But any excuse was good enough to give him the chance of speaking to her.

"Thank you," she said stiffly. "But it is no weight at all," and she passed on.

He turned and went with her. But she felt that she could not endure his presence.

"Really, Mr. Egerton," she said with a forced carelessness, contradicted by the brightness of her eyes, "I do not want an escort, and I believe, Mr. Cowan"—Mr. Egerton's land agent—"is waiting to see you at the house."

"I saw him only yesterday, and he can't want me very urgently," he said, trying, too, to speak with his old indolent slowness, "and if you would allow me, I should like to accompany you."

Her eyes flashed, and she stopped.

"But I do not want you. I suppose you will not insist on coming if that is the case?"

"Certainly not!" with a slight laugh, though he paled a little as he stepped back.

Then, driven by who could tell what madness, overwhelmed by the thought of the way in which they had sacrificed her to the service of the outcast son, he caught her hand and kissed it.

"Mr. Egerton!" The next second she had struck the hand he had kissed against the tree under which they were standing. "How dare you—oh!" The words choked in her throat, and she turned from him and hurried on.

In her passion her hand was bruised and wounded, but she felt no pain. It was deadened by the intolerable insult of his kiss. It was with that insult still burning in her heart that, an hour later, she met Wilfred Egerton.

She passed the summer-house in the wilderness on her way back to the house. It was the path she usually took coming and going to Eason's cottage.

Wilfred Egerton knew this.

As she came out now, between the trees, into the opening before the old summer-house, to her dismay and alarm she saw, standing there in the full daylight, Wilfred Egerton himself.

In her fear for his safety she lost sense for the instant of the awkwardness of the meeting.

He was standing by the steps of the summer-house, the door of which stood open behind him.

As he caught sight of her he came forward to meet her.

"Oh, Mr. Egerton! Please go back! How could you? It is selfish of you!" she exclaimed, indignant, breathless. "You should think of the others, if you don't care for yourself!"

"I came to see you," he said, and something in the dark, unsmiling face brought back all the previous evening, and paling and quivering at the memory of it she drew back a step. But she could still think of the peril he was running. "My mother told me a little while ago that you had gone out," he said, unheeding her remonstrance, "and I guessed you would return this way. She told me, too, that I should not see you to-day. I could not wait till to-morrow, or perhaps the next day, perhaps never see you again, for I may have to leave at any moment, now. I wanted to tell you something. I have no right to say it. I love you, Miss Brown. If I can make anything decent of the rest of my life, do you think you could forgive me any trouble or annoyance I have unwillingly brought on you?"

She looked at him, flushing and paling, dumb, bewildered, and frightened.

It was the first time that she had seen him in the full light of day. As the morning sunlight fell on it, she saw how worn and lined the face was. There was something almost death-like in the yellowish white of the skin, caused by suffering and confinement in his unhealthy prison, while the sad eyes seemed to read down into her very heart.

"Oh!" she cried uncertainly. "If you would only go back." From the distance came the sound of approaching voices. "Oh, please go back!" in an agony of terror. "They will find you—then—oh! what should I do?"

And the secret of her heart broke out in the pathetic, passionate cry.

"My darling!" with a quick step to her side, and catching her hands in his, he lifted them, holding them to his heart for a second. "For your sake—I will go. There is something to live for now. Good-bye—dearest!"

And she stood there alone in a world full of sunshine, where sorrow and sighing were not known; where there was no death—only the wonderful, illimitable life of love.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXX.

MISS POMEROY'S visit to Mrs. Romaine was postponed for a fortnight. At one time, indeed, it seemed not impossible that Mrs. Pomeroy's visit to her sister in Devonshire might be postponed indefinitely, and Mrs. Romaine was charmingly inconsolable over her prospective disappointment.

It was a delightful thing to have a girl in the house! Mrs. Romaine made the discovery and the statement as the very first evening of Miss Pomeroy's stay with her drew to a close. And certainly, the evening, signalised by a little dinner-party, had been pleasant enough to warrant satisfaction. Julian had been in the best possible spirits, elated apparently by the presence of his mother's visitor, at whose side he was to be found whenever his duties as host allowed such concentration of his attention. Miss Pomeroy herself had been a model of gentle amiability, and had looked more than usually bright and pretty. Loring, who had made one of the dinner guests, had also been at his best and most amusing. No tête-à-tête of any length had, of course, been possible between him and his hostess; but a quick, low-toned word or two passed between them in the movement that ensued upon the reappearance of the men in the drawing-room after dinner, which seemed to give a touch of reality to Mrs. Romaine's air of well-pleased vivacity.

And on the tone of that first evening, that

of the fortnight into which Miss Pomeroy's stay lengthened itself was modelled. They were very dissipated, Mrs. Romaine asserted laughingly; and she further declared that she had never enjoyed dissipation so much. Julian's hard-working impulses seemed to be in partial abeyance for the time being; their demands on him, though peremptory when they did occur, did not prevent a great deal of attendance on his mother and her guest. Loring also seemed hardly to have settled back into his usual routine, and frequently made one of the party. His appearance on the scene, and the recognition of that compact between them which he never failed to make, either by a glance or a few quiet words, were never without a certain effect on Mrs. Romaine; not on her spirits, for they never varied in their gaiety; but on a hard restlessness in her eyes, always lessened for the moment by that look or word from Loring.

The last day of June was also the last day of Mrs. Pomeroy's absence from London, and it was, moreover, the day fixed for a certain dance which was to stand out from all the other dances of the season. The givers of this dance were parvenus of the most pronounced type, and during the past three seasons, they had paid their way into London society by spending fortunes on the entertainments they gave. This season they had issued cards of invitation, on which each guest was requested to wear mediæval Florentine dress, and it had been whispered abroad that thousands were to be spent in providing such a setting for these costumes as should eclipse anything hitherto seen. Fortunately for the projectors—and nobody knew better than they how absolutely impossible it was to calculate in such

a matter—the idea caught society's fancy ; it was taken up with the wild enthusiasm which alternates in the modern mind with blasé indifference ; and as every one with an invitation had spent some three weeks in ardent consideration of his or her dress for the occasion, that occasion had acquired a fictitious importance of a colossal nature, and was absolutely looked forward to as promising something quite unusual—and equally indefinite, in the way of amusement.

The whole thing had evidently been arranged, Mrs. Romaine declared gaily, to give a final touch of triumph to the end of Maud Pomeroy's visit to her. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon of the day in question, and she and Miss Pomeroy, with Julian as escort, were taking what she described as "a little turn" in the Park when she expressed this opinion. It was a perfect June afternoon, the Park was very full and gay, and all three seemed to be exhilarated either by the sunshine, the movement, or the prospect of the evening. The fortnight's intimate association with her present companions had apparently had no effect whatever upon Miss Pomeroy's demure 'conventionality of manner, but her word was readier than usual, and her expression was brighter ; Mrs. Romaine, as she talked and laughed and kept the ball of chatter going, was an embodiment of well-satisfied vivacity ; and about Julian's hilarity there was a touch of excitement which was a characteristic which had grown upon him markedly in the course of the last month. He turned upon his mother, protesting gaily.

"That's much too depressing a point of view," he said. "It forces on us exactly what we want to forget—that it is the end. Now, I've made up my mind to cut the connection between to-night and both yesterday and to-morrow, and enjoy myself tremendously."

"And is 'cutting the connection'—it sounds as if something might blow up—an indispensable preliminary ?" laughed Mrs. Romaine.

"Why, of course." He glanced at Miss Pomeroy as he spoke, and the colour deepened in her cheeks by just a shade as she turned to Mrs. Romaine and said, with one of her little smiles and a rather poor attempt at mock confidence :

"Mr. Romaine wants to forget the terrific anxiety which he has already suffered over that gorgeous dress of his, and the terrific bill from which he has still to suffer."

Julian's protestations were as eager and boyish in manner as they were delicate and skilful in matter, and Mrs. Romaine broke in upon them with a laughing apology and a request that Julian would tell the coachman to turn out into Piccadilly and drive to a house in Grosvenor Place. Julian gave the order, and added to it :

"You can pull up when you get out of the Park."

Mrs. Romaine took up the words instantly.

"Are you not coming with us, bad boy ?" she said. "Come and help us pay one call at any rate. We are going straight home after that to prepare ourselves for the triumphs of the evening by a little refreshing laziness, are we not, Maud ?"

"I should like to immensely !" returned Julian ardently as Miss Pomeroy smiled a pretty response. "But I'm afraid I must go down to the club. I promised to meet Loring there ! Dinner at eight, I suppose !" he added as the carriage drew up and he jumped out. "Au revoir !"

He stepped back on the pavement, lifting his hat as the carriage drove off. Then he jumped into a hansom and gave the word to drive, not to the club but to the Temple. Arrived there he ran upstairs, the excitement about him gaining ground moment by moment, to Marston Loring's rooms. Loring was there alone. He was seated at the writing-table writing rapidly, his face keen and intent, and he suspended his work for an instant only as he glanced up on the opening of the door and nodded a greeting.

Julian's life for the last month had been lived at that high pressure which is only produced in a man by the consciousness that he has burnt his ships. Every shilling that he had accumulated during the previous six months was invested in the scheme propounded to him a month ago by Marston Loring ; and the history of his real life during the interval would have been a history of the stages through which that scheme had passed. The affairs of the Welcome Diamond Mining Company had followed precisely the course indicated by Loring during that first interview on the subject between Loring, Ramsay, and Julian. Shortly after that interview "Welcome" had fallen to a nominal price ; they had then been bought up according to arrangement. A slight rise had followed as a matter of course, followed by an interval of vacillation, and a slow succession of

trifling advances, which had again been succeeded by a period of quiet.

So far the excitement with which every hour had been instinct for Julian had been the excitement of preparation solely; the ground had been tilled and the seed sown. And what that soil was in which he had sown his seed; what were the characteristics that were to prove so stimulating; it was not in him to consider. He was perfectly well aware of the nature of the transaction in which he was engaged; he had understood at the outset that the "private information received from the Cape" on which the shares were to be bought up was a "put up thing," as he would have expressed it, between Ramsay and Marston Loring; and the knowledge affected him not at all. That black thread in the warp of his character was running strong and deep now, and to such considerations his sensibilities were absolutely dormant.

"Well!" the monosyllable broke from him eager and impetuous, as though it contained the pent-up suspense and excitement of hours. He had come up rapidly to Loring's side, and the latter, without lifting his eyes, signed to an evening paper which lay on the table as he said briefly:

"All right!"

Julian's face turned quite white; he snatched up the paper and turned with breathless eagerness to the column devoted to the money market.

"Welcome Diamond Company Shares."

The blue eyes seemed to leap at the line and fasten on it with a hungry avidity pitiful to see, and he stood there gazing at it with glittering, fascinated eyes, with a curious stillness upon him from head to foot, as though all remembrance of his actual surroundings, all thought even of Loring, had faded. Nearly five minutes had passed when Loring laid down his pen and leant back in his chair, turning a little that he might fix his eyes on Julian as he stood rather behind him.

"Pretty fair?" he said carelessly.

Julian lifted his eyes from the paper and turned his white face to Loring. He nodded as though the feelings of the moment were not to be put into speech, and then the slow, deep colour of excitement began to creep over his features.

"Have you seen Ramsay?" he said in a low, quick voice.

"Saw him this morning. He told me things were beginning to move. It was that paragraph yesterday that did it!"

"And what about keeping it up?" said Julian. "This is the ticklish moment, I take it! What's the next move?"

He had thrown himself into a chair as he spoke; his voice was jerking with eagerness, as though some of his excitement were finding expression. Loring looked at him for an instant before he answered. He was asking himself a question which had formulated itself in his mind more than once in the last month; namely, was it merely the influence of his blood which made young Romaine so keen a speculator; or was there something concealed in the background of his life which made money a desperate necessity with him?

"This is the next move," he answered, indicating the sheets of manuscript paper which lay before him. "This will be in one or two of the papers to-morrow, and if I'm not mistaken it will have a big effect!"

Julian stretched out his hand impulsively for the sheets and ran through them, now and then breaking into an eager comment; and as he finished he rose impetuously and began to pace excitedly up and down the room. His face was flushed now, and his eyes glowing.

"Yes, that ought to take us a long way!" he said. "And Ramsay backing it up all the while, of course? Loring, what do you make of it? An affair of—weeks?"

"An affair of two or three weeks, all told!" returned Loring nonchalantly. "The inside of a month ought to put the best part of thirty thousand into each of our pockets, my boy."

He rose as he spoke, and gathered together the sheets of manuscript, but as he did so his quick ear caught a strange, sharp catch in Julian's breath. He fastened up the papers, and directed them with another of those slight smiles, and then turned again to the younger man. Julian was standing at the window staring almost stupidly out.

"I'm going to turn you out now!" said Loring lightly. "Coming down to the club with me?"

Julian turned round, but the words seemed to penetrate slowly to his consciousness.

"No!" he said at last. "No, thanks, old man. I—I'm going to get home."

He had to go to his own chambers first, it appeared, however, and Loring left him

with a careless "All right! See you to-night, of course!"

The sunshine had left Julian's room, bright as it still was outside, and it looked, perhaps, the darker by contrast as he opened the door and shut himself in alone. He paused a moment, with his hand on the lock, and then walked aimlessly across to the writing-table and sat down. There was a pale, dazed look about him.

The line in the evening paper at which he had gazed with such devouring eyes had chronicled the first important rise of those shares on which his hopes were staked; chronicled, in fact, the beginning of the end. As he sat there alone, the words seemed to stand out all about him; to meet his eyes in every direction; and it was little wonder that, as he realised that the seed so eagerly sown had indeed broken ground at last, the perfect fruit seemed to be already in his hand, and he was dazed and intoxicated with anticipated triumph. He had the blood of a speculator and a gambler in his veins, and as he sprang up suddenly from his chair and began to pace up and down the room, it was the surging of the speculator's instinct that flushed his face and glittered in his eyes; the rioting of that money passion which, to the man who has never felt its fever, is the strangest and most repulsive—as it is the most abnormal—of all passions.

But little by little, without volition or even consciousness on his part, the current of his thoughts changed. Gradually that greedy, tumultuous contemplation of money as an end wavered, altered into a contemplation of money as a means, into a passing over of that means in the realisation of the end which it was to bring about. He was thinking of Clemence, thinking of her in a tumult of excitement in which the goading of that two-edged dart of love and shame which quivered always in his better nature was absolutely unfelt; thinking of her in a very hallucination of intoxicated triumph. He was living out with her a future life of triumphant satisfaction; a life so utterly incompatible with the facts of the case, with all that had come and gone, and must still come and go, as to be a most pathetic imagining, when the sound of a clock striking brought him suddenly to himself.

His first conscious thought was a certain vague surprise at his surroundings; as far as externals went he had left Loring's room and had come to his own like a man walk-

ing in his sleep. Then he realised the nature of the sound that had roused him and drew out his watch to see what hour it was that had struck. It was seven, and the fact, with the pressing necessity for his return home which it involved, gave a turn to the current of his thoughts by which, without changing their main character, they were blended in with the actual practicalities of the moment. He thought of his mother with a certain bitter triumph. "It's not for long," he said to himself, "not for long now." His mind ran on over the details of the evening before him; the little dinner—"only ourselves," Mr. Romaine had said gaily; the artificialities that would pass between himself and his mother; the effective flirtation which he would have to keep up with Miss Pomeroy—the flirtation which in the excitement of the past month he had carried on with reckless skill. And then with his hand on the door he stopped abruptly—stopped and stood quite still with a strange, defiant recklessness growing in his face. Whether it was some curious effect of the tumult through which he had passed, whether it originated in those jubilant visions of Clemence from which he had so recently awakened, it is not possible to say. But on that instant there had risen within him an impulse of fierce, overmastering repulsion against his mother, against Miss Pomeroy, against the part he had chosen to play. Almost before he had realised the sudden sense of overwhelming revolt and distaste which had seized him its obverse was upon him. Clemence! To see Clemence! To speak to Clemence! To satisfy the hungry longing which, for the moment, seemed absolutely to possess him!

Such a longing, in various forms and degrees, had shaken and torn him often before, but hitherto something—some influence from Clemence's own words, some jarring and throbbing of that better nature in himself—had held him back. But now, strung up and carried out of himself by his excitement, he was impervious to all considerations save that of his own overmastering craving. The end was very near now, he told himself. It was a question of a week or two only. He must see her; she herself would see that it was only reasonable that he should see her!

His plans were laid in the passing of a few seconds. The only address Clemence had given him was that of the house

of business where she worked—where she had worked when he met her first—his only chance of seeing her lay in meeting her when she left her work at night. He would not go home to dinner, he decided; he would telegraph to his mother, and dine at a quiet restaurant. That would bring him, as he knew well enough, to the earliest hour at which the "hands," of whom Clemence made one, were likely to be released, and he would wait in the little by-street in which the "hands'" entrance was situated until she came.

He went out of the room with a quick, assured step, sent off his telegram—a brief "Detained. Inconsolable"—from an office in Fleet Street, and then, carefully avoiding the fashionable resorts, he walked to the restaurant he had mentally selected.

The little street which, for some scores of men and women, formed the picture evoked by a name which for the shopping population of London involved a mental vision of a busy thoroughfare and a considerable expanse of plate-glass windows, ran parallel to that thoroughfare, divided from it only by a long block of buildings; and bearing in mind the slight nature of the division between the two, the contrast presented was almost startling. The little street was a thoroughfare inasmuch as it led from one side-street to another; but these streets were very little frequented, and the connecting-link between them was a short cut to nowhere. It represented simply so many back entrances to places of business, and these being to a great extent monopolised by a single firm, the comings and goings at stated times of the hands employed by that firm was often the only movement that broke the quiet from morning until night. In the intervals between these comings and goings there brooded over the street such a silence and stillness as seemed strangely incompatible with the thought of all the labour and effort that it held; with the hard day's work towards which those coming footsteps in the morning were bent; with the hard day's work which lay behind those departing footsteps in the evening. The street itself had a squalid, neglected look, too, as though life and activity had passed it by.

The day's work was not over yet, though the evening light was making long shadows, and the setting sun was turning the upper windows of the opposite houses into ruddy fire; the street was absolutely silent and deserted when Julian turned

quickly into it. He pulled up and surveyed his surroundings with a rapid, comprehensive glance.

It was too early yet. He looked at his watch and told himself so with somewhat over-elaborated carelessness, and took out his cigarette-case. He lighted a cigarette, and pacing slowly up and down the pavement on the opposite side of the street to that on which he expected Clemence to emerge, he began to reckon with himself the chances for and against her speedy or tardy appearance.

But such practical, matter-of-fact considerations involved a deliberate mental action on his part, and having gone through it, urged by that curious instinct under which intense excitement always desires to assert itself as absolute calm and sanity, he gradually let himself slip away again from the practical and the actual, and gave himself up to the tide of his exhilarated imaginings. His face was flushed, his eyes bright with a strange kind of elation; that elation which is as unnatural as intoxication, and involves much the same transfiguring of facts and ignoring of consequences.

There is nothing more exciting, nothing that sooner quickens the mental pulses into a very fever of confusion, than the sudden indulgence of an impulse long resisted. The hour that had passed since the idea, of which his presence in that quiet little street was the outcome, had flashed into Julian's mind and dominated it, had carried him as completely out of himself, and out of touch with realities, as is a man under the influence of absinthe. As a man so exhilarated will be impervious to a considerable amount of physical pain, so Julian was for the time being absolutely unconscious of anything painful or shameful in his position. The circumstances under which he had parted from Clemence; all the bitter pain and longing under which he had smarted and writhed with such fierce rebellion; the attitude towards himself which his conduct might only too justly have created in his wife; were absolutely obliterated from his mind. He was waiting now—husband, master, altogether the superior, triumphant, successful, self-assured—for his mistaken but doubtless submissive wife; conscious, and rather pleased with the consciousness, that he loved her in spite of her faults.

One quarter after another chimed out from a neighbouring clock. He had been waiting nearly an hour, oblivious, in his

elation, of tedium or weariness; oblivious of the claim upon him of the life of Queen Anne Street as though it had no existence for him. The slight feeling of impatience with which he realised that the fourth quarter was chiming was entirely unconnected with such externals; and it was an eloquent testimony to his mental attitude that it took the form of a faint sense of irritation with Clemence for delaying so long. A vague feeling of lordly disapproval of her conduct stirred in him, as he paused at the top of the street and glanced across at the still fast-closed doors. He was just looking dubiously at his cigarette-case when the click of a latch, instantly followed by the sound of girls' voices, made him start violently. He thrust the case hastily into his pocket and walked quickly down the street, until he was standing just opposite the door from which a little stream of girls and women was pouring forth.

Several figures had already detached themselves from the stream and were moving rapidly away, either singly or in pairs; but one quick glance told him that neither of these was Clemence, and he fixed his eyes with eager confidence on the doorway through which she had still to pass. His face was flushed with intense excitement. On came the stream, girls and women following one another in unbroken succession; pretty girls, plain girls, shabby girls, smart girls, some arm in arm, some laughing and talking in loud-voiced groups; several of these groups noticed his waiting figure and commented upon it in giggling whispers, turning back as they passed down the street to look at it again, but Julian only saw that none of these was Clemence. The stream was beginning to dwindle; stragglers followed one another now at irregular intervals; the two girls who had been the last to appear had nearly reached the end of the street, and still Julian's eyes were riveted on the open doorway.

The girls turned the corner, and down the dim passage into which he was looking there came slowly another figure quite alone. Before it had merged into the light Julian was across the road, as though that one great throb with which his heart leapt up to meet her had impelled him physically, and as Clemence passed out into the soft dusk of the June evening he spoke her name eagerly, at first, then with a strange break in his voice:

"Clemence! Clemence!"

At the first sound of his voice—evidently the first sign to her that he was near—a low, indescribable cry broke from Clemence; she turned towards him trembling, swaying as she stood, and Julian caught her in his arms lest she should fall.

"You've come!" she cried, and before the exquisite rapture and relief of her faint, quivering voice, with all that it implied of suffering past, a harder ~~was~~ than Julian might have melted. "My dear, my dear, I knew you'd come! I knew! I knew!"

But that pathetic voice had not been needed. The first sight of her face as she turned it upon him with that wonderful irradiation of joy upon it, had shrivelled into nothingness all the exultation, all the triumph and self-satisfaction of the past few hours, and Julian held her in his arms, his trance over, self-convicted, self-condemned; his whole consciousness absorbed in that heavy, throbbing agony of his better nature which had leapt into sudden relentless life. What it was that so penetrated him he could not have defined. Where and in what proportion old influence revived, touched, and was blended with a heart-piercing sense of the change in her, he could not have said; he did not even know that these were indeed the powers that had struck him. The change in her, even as he gazed down at her face with agonised, remorseful eyes, as it rested for one moment on his shoulder, he rather felt than traced and understood.

That change was very great. Those past six months had dealt heavily with that thin, white face, and the marks of their passing were plain to see, even in that moment of absolute transfiguration. Every curve, every suggestion of girliness seemed to have been worn away; worn away by those cruel twin refinements, never so pitiless as when they work together—physical suffering and mental distress. The outline of her features had lost some of its beauty in that intense accentuation; the colourless lips were slightly drawn, and under the sunken eyes were heavy shadows. But no remembrance of the physical loveliness which she had lost could stand for an instant before the spiritual loveliness which she had gained. It was as though those twin refinements, before whom nothing earthly or external can stand and flourish, had strengthened that which lay behind those externals with which they had dealt so ruthlessly. The eyes, so indescribably beautiful as they looked now

into Julian's, had been beautiful even in that moment before she realised his presence; beautiful in their heaviness as no brightness, as no common happiness could have made them, beautiful with the perfect patience and dignity of accepted suffering. The tired mouth had been beautiful in its repose, as it was beautiful now in its tremulous rapture; beautiful in its quiet constancy and self-abnegation.

She let herself rest for a moment in his arms; clinging to him with something in her touch which he had never felt before; looking up into his face as her head lay back against his shoulder with a strange, tremulous, tender light quivering on every feature, shaken from head to foot by little tremulous, tearless sobs—the sobs of utter relief and peace. Then she disengaged herself gently, and drew herself away, something of that first ecstasy dying out of her face to leave it soft and happy beyond all words. That strange light still shone in her eyes, and, as she moved, one thin hand retained its clinging hold on his arm, as though some instinct of dependence influenced her involuntarily. She was dressed, not as the other girls had been, in a light summer jacket, but in a long cloak, and as she drew it about her with the other hand, the softest touch of colour came into her white cheek.

"My dear!" she said softly. "My dear!"

And Julian whispered hoarsely as he had whispered again and again:

"Clemmie! Clemmie!"

He made no attempt to take her in his arms again. Even the gesture with which he laid his hand upon those clinging fingers on his sleeve was diffident and almost tremulous; tender and reverent as no gesture of his had ever been in all his life before. He could find no words. In her presence everything—all the triumph, all that had seemed to him the necessities and realities of life—seemed to have fallen away from him. He was nothing. He had nothing! He could say nothing to her.

There was a silence; silence which for Clemence as her fingers closed round his, and that soft colour came and went in her cheeks, breathed an ineffable content; silence which for Julian held the blackest depths of self-revelation and self-contempt. It was broken at last by Clemence.

"Is it done, dear?" she said gently.

Julian's hand turned cold in hers, and his eyes fell away from her face.

"Not—not yet, Clemmie!" he faltered

wretchedly. "I—I came to tell you—to tell you that——"

"That you are going to do it! That you are going to do it! My dear, my dear, you mean that! Oh, you mean that, don't you?"

She had not raised her voice or changed her pose, but that touch upon his arm had become a close, convulsive grip, and even the clutch of the worn, blanched hand upon her cloak witnessed to the agony of supplication with which every nerve was strained and quivering. Her low voice thrilled and vibrated with it; her white face, to which his first words had brought a look of heart-sick disappointment, was an embodied prayer. He could not answer on the instant; it cut him like a lash; and she went on rapidly, her low, beseeching voice breaking and trembling with the intense feeling that flickered on her face like a light.

"Julian, for my sake, for your wife's sake, dear; I love you so! I—I need you so! Don't part us any longer! If it was for your good, if it was to make you happy, there's nothing I would not face, and face cheerfully—ah, you know that, don't you? But you're doing wrong, and I think of it always, and it makes the loneliness so that I can't bear it. Oh, I can't bear it!"

She broke suddenly into low shuddering sobs and tears, and her head fell forward helplessly on to his breast, though she still kept her convulsive hold upon his arm. He put his other arm round her and drew her towards him, and as he did so he seemed to realise with a kind of double consciousness the course he would take and its utter contemptibility.

"Don't, Clemmie, dear! Don't! don't!" he said in a broken, uneven voice. "It's all right, dear! I'm going to do it! I came to tell you so! It's all right!"

"You're going to—tell her?"

"I am, Clemence! I promise you I am! Only—only not for a week or two. There's—there's something I must wait for!"

"But you are going to? You are? You are?"

"On my—on my soul, yes, Clemence!"

There was a moment's silence, broken only by her low, tremulous sobs; then these too died away. At last, with a long sighing breath, she raised herself and looked into his pale, miserable face, with her own quiet and exhausted.

"Must you wait?" she said, with an indescribable accent on the first bitter word.

"Must you?"

"I—I must, dear!" he said desperately, his eyes trying wretchedly to avoid hers. "It shan't be long, I promise you; but I must wait just a little longer!"

She paused a moment, still looking into his face. Then, with a sudden lovely light in her eyes, she made a slight movement as though she would have bent his head down that she might murmur in his ear. She stopped herself, however, and there settled down upon her face a look of unutterable sadness. By Julian, in his helpless misery of self-contempt, the gesture had passed utterly unheeded.

"Don't let it be much longer, dear!" she said. "Good night!"

Julian caught at the last word as though it gave him some sort of chance of restoring his writhing self-respect.

"Good night!" he echoed. "Not yet, Clemence! I'm going to see you home, of course!"

But Clemence shook her head.

"No!" she said steadfastly, "no, dear!"

Something in her tone, something in the touch she laid upon him, took from him all power of self-assertion, all power of resistance to her will. She drew his head towards her now, kissed him softly on the forehead, and then turned and went away down the street, leaving him alone.

COURAGE.

It is a statement which you may, perhaps, have heard before; but there are many sorts of courage. It is a simple statement of a simple fact. And yet, in speaking of courage, it may be adequately treated under two different heads—moral and physical. It is when you come to consider each head in detail that the amazing number of varieties begins to appear—all of which may be said, roughly speaking, to group themselves under one head or the other.

In the estimation of very many people moral courage ranks high above physical. But this is by no means so certain as these authorities seem to think. They are apt, some of them, to suffer from a confusion of ideas. According to them, the employé who brings up his family on a pittance, and refrains from robbing the bank, shows moral courage; while the man in the same position who robs the bank, shows—what? Immoral courage. On what grounds do they say this? The difference between moral and physical courage is, surely,

simple—the one is an affair of the mind, the other of the body. The honest man shows courage of a passive kind, the dishonest courage of an active kind. Both spring from the same source—the mind, the intellect. It is quite possible that the honest man may be a very coward, letting I dare not wait upon I would—he would rob if he were not afraid of the consequences. While the dishonest man has the courage of his desires, dares everything, and has no fear of what may follow.

If we allow for a moment that moral courage is synonymous with what we may idiomatically call goody-goodyness, we shall at once be landed in a quagmire. We shall open the door for every faddist, every charlatan. Moral courage has no necessary connection with goodness—or, for the matter of that, with badness either. They tell us so when we are children, but every hour of every day they tell such falsehoods to the child. For instance, that it shows a want of moral courage to tell a lie—experience teaches us that, not seldom, it shows a want of both moral and physical courage to tell the truth. Who shall deny that heroic lies have been told, and are being told, by men and women all the world over? As a matter of fact, some of the greatest villains surprise us—disagreeably surprise us—by the amount of moral courage they display. While some of the best of men and women surprise us—also disagreeably—by the minus quantity they display.

Courage, both moral and physical, is a matter, first, of constitution, and then of education—or experience, if you will. The timid child, as he learns more of the world, and of his own capacity, becomes a courageous man. The cowardly man, taught by experience, becomes a paladin of valour. The impulse of the average soldier, when he first finds himself in the presence of the enemy, is to cut and run. At the end of a long campaign he will charge a regiment and never turn a hair. Familiarity has bred contempt. Familiarity has a good deal to do with courage. The budding author, when first he finds himself in the presence of an editor, goes at the knees. By the time that he has become famous, he snubs all editors alike. It is the turn of the editor to go at the knees!

Somebody has said that we all of us are born cowards. I incline to the opinion that, at the least, the very large majority of us are born physical cowards. For my part, I rank moral courage as less than

physical. The other day I was reading an account, written in what seemed to me to be exaggerated language, of the courage displayed by a speaker in the presence of a hostile and angry audience. He made them listen to him in the end. The man but played the man, so far as I can see. The breath of the battle was in his nostrils. He is but a poor creature who cannot bear himself well when he knows that his opponents are all agog to see him flinch. The man who goes in search of a burglar in the middle of the night, shows a different, and, to my mind, a higher order of courage. There is no crowd looking on—above all, there are no reporters looking on, and the presence of a reporter is a wonderful incentive to courage. The man who, in the small hours of the morning, wakes from peaceful slumber, and becomes conscious that a burglar is plying his nefarious trade downstairs, and who, although he has no weapons of defence or offence, nor practice to use them if he had, yet never for a moment loses his presence of mind, but rises from his warm bed, and slips on some clothes, and walks off to interview that burglar then and there—I say that the man who strolls down to such an interview as if he were strolling down to his breakfast, is the sort of man whom you only now and then encounter. Nowadays the courageous orator, stump or otherwise, lives in half the houses down your street!

I have met brave men in my time, men whose deeds of valour have been the commonplaces of the nations. But I never met a man who I felt persuaded would be willing, not to speak of anxious, to attack in cold blood another man from whom he knew he would be absolutely certain to receive a tremendous thrashing. Plenty of men show physical courage; not so many of them show physical courage of that peculiar kind. While we must all of us have met persons whose moral courage we felt certain would stick at nothing either in heaven or in hell.

Our courage varies with our health, with all sorts of things. In some moods we feel capable of anything, sometimes of nothing at all. Now and then the blood quickens in our veins, and we feel fit and ready for any deed of daring; again, we are peace at any price men, and show it. I remember being guilty of an act of cowardice, which, although it was twenty years ago, makes me tingle to this hour when I think of it. I was crossing the

Place de la Cathédrale at Tours. It was in the small hours of the morning. The night was dark, and I apprehend that the grim mystery of the huge pile dedicated, if my memory does not fail me, to Saint Gatien gloomed down a trifle uncannily upon the Place. Anyhow, directly I set foot in it I was seized with sudden horror. I turned and bolted. I ran half round the town to my rooms in the Avenue de Grammont. When I reached them I was in a sweat of terror. I remember it as though it had been yesterday; and how I was wholly unable to control my senseless fears till sleep overtook me between the sheets. In the morning I laughed at my poltroonery, but I have not forgotten it to-day. And I console myself with the reflection that all heroes have yielded to sudden panics of unreasoning terror.

We are told that women show more moral courage than men. In one sense, yes; in another, no. Most women bear pain with quiet courage, and here and there a man; but the average man in pain bellows like a bull. Observe a man and a woman with a toothache—the contrast between them is surprising. The woman is resigned; the man obstreperous. The woman says as little as she can; the man calls heaven and earth to bear witness to his sufferings. How many a household is turned topsy-turvy when a masculine member of the establishment is a trifle ailing. But when a woman is in the case, everything goes on just as usual; she is only out of sorts, that's all. The wife of a neighbour of mine suffers from neuralgia—a sweet disease! But she never murmurs. Not long ago her husband sprained his ankle—there is not a soul about the house who does not wish, for the most purely selfish reasons, that they were in his place and he was in theirs. The servants have given notice, and the wonder is that his wife of many years has not given notice too.

But speaking of moral courage in another sense, the woman, as a rule, is not the equal of the man. The man who sits down and sets his teeth together and makes up his mind that he will put his mark upon the world before he leaves it, is not so rare a figure as some may imagine. Such a man, in the pursuit of his aim, will show a persistent moral courage which is almost, in its way, divine. With dogged determination he will go straight on, never faltering, never turning from the way right to the end, although that end, after all,

may be the tomb of the unsuccessful. Throughout his lifelong struggles he will evince infinite patience—as infinite, that is, as is possible in the case of a finite man. My experience, such as it is, goes to teach me that it is in the matter of patience that the ambitious woman is apt to be wanting. She starts with a dash, but failure, sooner or later, brings her breathless to her knees. If she plucks up spirit to start again, she falls, when she does fall, more heavily than before. Not improbably it is with a feeling of absolute satisfaction that she takes up a position in life altogether different to the one for which she originally strove. To every rule there are numerous exceptions. But I believe that, in that sort of moral courage which enables a man or a woman to surmount innumerable obstacles in pursuit of a longed-for goal, the average woman is less richly dowered than the average man.

There are many sorts of courage which both men and women would be better without, but, unfortunately, are not. There is the courage of impudence. It abounds to-day. It is all the fashion. If you want a thing, and cannot get it in any other way, try impudence—that is a recipe which is constantly being given in the papers. Then there is the courage of ignorance. Not long ago I was in a room in which there was an eminent pianist. He played as, so far as I know, he alone can play, one of Chopin's masterpieces—dowering his finger-tips with the eloquence of many voices. Directly he had finished the lady of the house went sailing up to him. "Thank you so much! You should hear my little girl—I do so want you to tell me what you think of her. For so small a child—not yet learnt music two years—we think she's wonderful."

Before the astonished virtuoso, whose knowledge of English is not profound, could get a word in edgeways, there was a small child about nine years of age planted on the music-stool with "Ye Banks and Braes," with variations, opened out in front of her. In a self-sufficient little nonentity, who had not "yet learnt music two years," and who, naturally, had no music in her, the performance was excusable, and it would be too much to say that sudden death would have been its only adequate reward—but in the presence of that famed musician! I do not know what he suffered. I know what we felt. That mother, I suggest, showed the

courage of ignorance. The budding poetaster, who sends the immortal singer "a few copies of his verses," being anxious to know if the immortal singer is not of opinion that he also has a spark of the "divine afflatus"—he shows the courage of ignorance. The cockney who, never having been outside a horse before, follows, or essays to follow, with his hired hack the veteran fencer over a five-barred gate—he shows the courage of ignorance in another way. I once saw the courage of ignorance exemplified in yet another fashion. It was at Biarritz, where, in the season, I fancy there is as much "punting" as at Monte Carlo. It was one night at the Casino. A youth who seated himself at a baccarat-table caught my eye at once—he was so obviously one of those young compatriots of mine who exercise their talents "in the City" in exchange for thirty shillings a week or so. Directly the play began his face was a study. I do not know how he had managed to get where he was, but after it had been signified to him, "in the usual manner," that his room was desired rather than his company, and that non-players were not supposed to seat themselves where he had done, I made his acquaintance, which was not a difficult thing to do, and he said:

"I like a little gamble when I'm at home, so I thought I'd have one here. But when they began to ladle out the gold in handfuls I felt funny. Why, I've only brought the change of a ten-pound note with me to see me through the fortnight."

Perhaps above all is the courage of ignorance shown by the amateur, a not infrequent being, who makes up his mind to play Hamlet, or some similarly modest rôle, and who then invites all the living masters and mistresses of the dramatic art to come and see him play the fool.

The courage of one's opinions is a common sort of courage. The individual has the courage of his opinions who considers that felony is a suitable profession for a gentleman to engage in, and who proves it by his practice. "I have the courage of my opinions," exclaims the gentleman who insists upon interrupting the political meeting, "and I mean to show it;" and he does, as they land him in the gutter. "If a man has opinions," cries Jawkins, "he ought to have the courage of them. I'm of opinion that every man ought to go to church twice on Sundays, and if I had the power I'd make

'em;" and, when he becomes M.P., he tries to. "My dear," says Mrs. Bicker, "what is the use of having an opinion if you have not the courage of it? It's my opinion that Mrs. Snicker is a most improper person, and every opportunity I get I shall not be afraid to say so;" and she is not afraid. And, oh! what a bill her husband has to pay for slander! The fact is, that nothing is easier than to have the courage of our opinions. We are most of us of opinion that nobody else is half as good as ourselves, and some of us are not afraid to show it; and that is why it becomes more and more difficult to find standing room for lunatics. It is because men have had the courage of their opinions that history has had its holocausts, and heaven resounds with the complaints of martyred millions.

There is a kind of courage which, unfortunately, is also too familiar to us to-day—the kind of courage which is shown by the man who resolves to make himself, careless whom he mars. A very lofty form of both moral and physical courage it sometimes is. Jay Gould illustrated it in America. Financiers are illustrating it every day all the world over. I take it that, with these men, courage is all in all. If their nerve, their courage, falters, they are done. Their enemies—they have no friends, only enemies—devote all their energies to frightening them. If they can only succeed in frightening them, the game is won. But the most dangerous of these modern adventurers are never frightened. Would that they were! If it were not for his "courage du diable" the millionaire financier would not be the prominent figure he is to-day. He would not be so unpromising a problem, which the future will have to solve. We should not be asking ourselves what on earth we shall do with him if he continues to increase at the rate at which he is increasing.

The courage of the coward is another form of courage which is by no means infrequent. And a peculiar form this is, though it is true courage in its way. Because it must be remembered that it does require a certain amount of courage—sometimes a considerable amount of courage—to enable one to confess that one is apt to give at the knees. In a general company, especially in one which consists wholly of strangers, it is, to phrase it gently, much easier to confess to valour than to the other kind of thing. Show

me the man who, say in an hotel smoking-room, when the conversation turns upon deeds of daring, is willing, when he is called upon, to own that the white feather is his favourite plume. The coward, who is always willing to confess himself a coward, has, at least, some courage, which is true courage of its kind. There are some forms of cowardice which all men seem determined to repudiate. Did you ever meet a man who would admit that he would be afraid of a ghost? I find that the ordinary man declares, with an air of the most profound conviction, that he would be only too glad to have a chance of seeing one. "Show me a haunted house—a genuine haunted house, my boy, and I'll give a tenner to spend a night alone in it!" That is the sort of remark one often hears. Men have gone out of their way to spend solitary nights in so-called haunted houses. I once spent a week or two in a little Bavarian village, some ten or twelve miles from Nuremberg. At some distance from the village, in a very lonely situation, was a half-ruined cottage, which, locally, had an uncanny reputation. Because it was reported to be haunted, a couple of Americans, who were quartered at the local inn, spent not one night, but several nights, in it. They saw nothing, perhaps because there was nothing to be seen. And it has often struck me that if men, generally speaking, were not morally persuaded that graves do not yield up their dead, even in rare instances, and then only for a moment or two, we should not hear so many protestations of cheap valour as to what they would do if a spiritual visitant did chance to come their way. Most of us must own that a ghost story, in the hands of an artist—alas, too rare a bird!—does give us the creeps, even in the middle of the day. For myself, I am by no means sure that I should like to meet a traveller returned, for a time, from shadowland. I do not know if it would be worse, or better, to meet him by appointment, as it were, or unexpectedly. If one expected to meet him, one may be excused for fancying, as the hour for the interview drew near, that one's nerves would become as tense as fiddle-strings. At the slightest touch they would vibrate. What sort of tune would be played when they were touched—by such a player!—is more than one quite cares to say. As for coming upon a ghost, or having a ghost come upon you "all in a moment," without having received the

slightest premonitory hint of what was, literally, in the air—there may be men who, under such circumstances, would be able to “wink the other eye,” and ask, in commonplace tones, for a light, but I have my doubts if, of those men, I am one.

But, although there are forms of cowardice which all men are unwilling to admit ever could find a lodgement in their breasts, still there are cowards who are not only self-avowed, but who actually have the courage of their cowardice. And, as has been said, a peculiar sort of courage it is. “I am afraid,” says Podkins, “to ask you for the loan of half-a-crown;” but although he is afraid, and owns that he is afraid, he asks you all the same. “I dare not encroach upon your time,” says Borer; but although he dares not, and confesses that he dares not, still he does, till you rise and hurl him through the tenth-floor window out into the street. Podkins and Borer are cowards of a painfully common type, who always have the courage of their cowardice—yes, and more. “I dare not do so-and-so,” simpers Miss Wiles. “Might I dare to ask you to do it for me?” That I call displaying the courage of one’s cowardice to a very marked degree. The courage of that type of coward, self-avowed, sticks at nothing. The story of A. who knocked up his neighbour B. in the middle of the night with the view of inducing B. to come and kill the mad dog which he, A., had locked up in his bedroom, and which had frightened him half out of his skin, is, I believe, an imagining of an American humorist. But whether the story be true or false, it seems to me that A., in endeavouring to get B. to do what he dared not do himself, showed courage of a really remarkable kind. “I say, old man,” cries Jones, “I wish you’d kick Brown.” “Whatever for?” “Because, old man, I daren’t.” Plenty of people, who desire to do disagreeable things while owning that they are too great cowards to do them themselves, have still sufficient courage to ask us to do those things for them.

It is to be noted that the qualities of the hero are often contained in, so to speak, a most unheroic-looking casket. I remember how astonished I felt when I first met a man whose fame as a “climber” had bridged the spheres. He was fond of hunting out unexplored mountain ranges in remote regions of the world, for the sole purpose, so far as I could understand the matter, of risking his neck where nobody else had ever risked his neck before.

One would expect that such an individual would at least have some of the outward seeming of an athlete. This particular person was a foppish little fellow, with a languid air, an eyeglass, and a most perceptible lisp—quite a dolly sort of man. He was silent on a good many subjects, but especially was he silent on the subject of mountaineering. Had I not had the best of reasons for knowing him to be the genuine Simon Pure, I should have suspected that some half-baked ninny had been suborned to take his place. A friend of mine is fond of telling a story of a celebrated “road agent” whom he once had the pleasure of encountering “out West.” I am not prepared to assert that his story is altogether free from a spice of exaggeration, but, as he tells it, it runs something like this.

He was coaching it from one mining town to another. The coach had its full complement of passengers. A rough-and-ready set they were. The conversation was chiefly about a certain “road agent” who had recently earned fame in those parts by, to put it mildly, his extremely remarkable proceedings. He had himself, at one period of his career, been a driver of stage coaches, and, in consequence, he was known as “Dick the Driver.” Those passengers talked about what they would do if, upon that particular journey, they encountered Dick the Driver. He should not “stick them up,” not he.

Among them was an individual whom my friend declares he took, not only for a country joskin, but, also, for more than half an idiot. His manners were so mild, and his countenance wore such an expression of vacuous simplicity. His fellow-passengers had made a butt of him from the moment in which he had made his appearance on the coach. At last a gigantic fellow, who sat beside him, jeeringly asked him what he would do if they encountered Dick the Driver. The simpleton said nothing. He looked at his questioner, and he took his hands from his pockets. There was a report, the giant fell over the side of the coach stone dead, shot through the heart. The simpleton stood up. It was seen that he had a pistol in either hand. He requested the coachman to pull up his team—which the coachman did, for reasons. He informed the company that he was Dick the Driver. According to the original narrator of this instructive little anecdote, he made every man jack of them, the driver included,

strip himself to the skin. He made them leave their clothes and their entire belongings on the top of the coach. He made them jump off it on to the road in a state of nature. There was something about him which was found to be most persuasive. He took the reins in his own hands, and leaving them, in that singularly unsatisfactory condition, to continue their conversation as to what they would do if they encountered Dick the Driver at their leisure, he drove that coach away. The story is introduced here for the purpose of providing another illustration of the truth that one should not always trust to appearances, and that it is sometimes unwise to take it for granted that a man is a coward merely because he looks one.

On the other hand, it is a delusion to suppose that Bombastes Furioso, the braggart, is invariably a cur. I have known instances which go to prove the contrary. The fact is, courage is an accident. It is difficult to tell, at a glance, who is its possessor and who is not. In those confidential moments in which we are our own society, are we quite certain whether we, ourselves, are or are not cowards? I have heard it stated that the man who is most firmly assured that he is a natural coward, is apt to perform prodigies of valour, simply because he hates the coward that is in him, and the force of his hatred spurs him on to drive the craven spirit out. There may be something in such a theory. We who are cowards, we will hope that there is. At any rate, as has been shown, there are so many sorts of courage, that it will go hard with us if we are not the possessors, say, at least, of one of them.

BARKER.

A COMPLETE STORY.

I THINK I may safely say that Barker has been the bane of my existence. We were at school together, and he made me break the rules so often that I was never free from punishment, or ever able to come within measurable distance of the height of my ambition—the good-conduct prize. When I remonstrated with him, he said it did not matter, only muffs ever got a conduct prize; but it did matter. My aunt had promised to give me a sovereign the first time I brought home a prize, and, thanks to Barker, she has that sovereign still.

Later in life we found ourselves in the same office in the City. Barker attached himself to me on the strength of our old school-fellowship, and again made my life miserable. He is a bumptious, self-assertive, healthy, athletic sort of man, is Barker, while I am modest and nervous. He forced himself upon me, and then did the most reckless things imaginable without a thought of what the consequences might be. He would, even without a ticket, enter a train in motion sooner than miss it, and, what was worse, if I was with him he would drag me in after him. If I ventured to hint that we were breaking the bye-laws and might be summoned, he laughed and said it would be all right. According to Barker whatever he did that he should not have done would be all right—and I must say he was lucky.

The ticket-collectors always took his word and his money without even hinting that he had been trying to defraud the company, and porters have actually aided and abetted him by opening doors and saying, "Come along, sir," when they ought to have stopped him—but then Barker always tips porters.

He had a tandem tricycle, too, and he made me go for rides on it with him. As soon as we were out of town he didn't care much what he did. If we passed a nice park, or a wood, he would propose that we should turn in and have a smoke, and when I pointed out that there was a board up threatening trespassers with prosecution, he would laugh, and, as usual, say it would be all right. He always left the lamp behind, assuring me that we should be back before dark, but we never were, and for the last mile or two I used to ride in fear and trembling, though we were never stopped. I believe Barker bribed the police.

Luckily I consulted my doctor about tricycling, and he said I was too nervous for it, so Barker had to find another victim. I joined a lawn-tennis club—Barker said tennis was all right when men played alone, but that women turned it into a babies' game, so I thought I should be free from him there—and through that I became engaged to Sophy Bell. We had been engaged some time when we had a little discussion about going to the theatre, which led to—but you will see what it led to if you read to the end; so, without further explanation, I will reproduce as much of it as concerns my story.

"Really, Algernon, I don't much care about going at all," said Sophy; but there were tears in her eyes as she spoke, and I knew that she did care, therefore I firmly but mildly insisted on my point.

"That is nonsense," I said. "You know you have been looking forward to it for months. Three weeks ago you asked me whether I had got the tickets yet."

"Yes, but then——" she began, and stopped. Then, apparently recognising how foolish she had been, she sighed and added: "Never mind, dear. I'll go if you wish it."

"Of course, I wish to give you pleasure, Sophy," I replied. "And really the gallery is——"

"Oh! for goodness' sake, don't begin all that over again," she interrupted, speaking with a tartness that surprised me. "It's settled now, and I will be ready by half-past six. Mind you're not late, sir."

"But, Sophy," I protested, "if I come down for you it will cost me threepence each way, and besides, there is no time. The doors open at seven-thirty, and we ought to be there at least three-quarters of an hour before that. Suppose you meet me in front of St. Paul's at six. We can easily walk from there."

She gave me a glance, the meaning of which I could not fathom, then sighed again, and said she would be there. I explained to her how, by starting in good time and walking part of the way, she could save a penny in 'bus fare, and we parted in the usual manner.

As I walked home, I thought that perhaps I had made a mistake in ever taking Sophy to the theatre at all. Probably I never should have done so, but, when we were first engaged, a man who owed money to our firm had sometimes given me orders. They were always for two, and it had seemed a pity not to make use of them, but unfortunately, I never told Sophy that I did not pay for our places, and when that man died suddenly, I found myself pledged, on the strength of a promise from him, to take her to see "Gentle Gladys" at the Irreproachable. Our engagement had reached the practically-sentimental stage, when money saved should mean furniture bought, and I hoped she would cordially fall in with my suggestion, that on this occasion we should go to the gallery.

She disappointed me. I am not a mean man, but I do object to paying eight shillings

when you can get practically the same article for two, and I could not make Sophy understand that the gallery is, practically, just the same as the upper circle. She said she thought I could afford something better, and though I told her it was not a question of what I could afford, but of where we should get the best value for money, she maintained that looking at the matter in that light took all the pleasure out of it—which is absurd; for what can be more exhilarating than the thought that you have made a better bargain in amusement than your neighbours!

It was this tendency towards obliquity of economic vision which made me sorry I had accustomed her to think I was in the habit of spending money unnecessarily, and I wished I had, at least, told her about those orders. It was too late, however, to do that now, so I met her outside St. Paul's as per arrangement, hoping that practical experience of the gallery would convince her that, considering everything, especially prices, it was the best part of the house.

The usual frequenters of the Irreproachable gallery are as respectable as the theatre itself, which, of course, is saying a great deal, but that evening, unfortunately, an Objectionable Character had thrust himself in among them, probably by mistake, and, still more unfortunately, he sat just in front of us. We had very good places in the middle of the second row, and, as I told Sophy, we ought to enjoy ourselves thoroughly if we could manage to ignore our disreputable neighbour.

Unfortunately again, he would not allow himself to be ignored. I believe he meant well, too, and have no doubt he was considered, by his usual associates, to be the very pink of politeness. He had shrimps in a paper bag, oranges in one pocket, nuts in another, and either chocolate or chewing tobacco—perhaps both—in a third, and during the half-hour that elapsed before the curtain went up, he not only refreshed himself with these delicacies but generously offered them to his neighbours.

I think that if Sophy had taken a shrimp, or even a nut, much of the unpleasantness which followed might have been averted, but she refused his kind offers in her most icy tone, and the two girls who sat next to him followed her example.

It was easy to see that the Character

resented this; in fact he scowled so diabolically that when he produced a flask of rum and offered it to me, I took a sip for the sake of peace and quietness.

"Pass it to the lady, governor," he said, as I was about to return it to him. "Perhaps it's more in her line than shrimps."

"I am sorry to say the lady is a total abstainer," I replied, doing my best to conciliate him with a smile.

"Poor thing!" he retorted. "Is she really? She don't look it either, do she?"

"Oh, Algernon!" whispered Sophy. "Let us go."

"Go—go where?" I asked, astonished.

"Out, home, anywhere to get away from that horrid wretch," she replied, "unless you can protect me from his impertinence."

Would you believe that, because I tried to convince her of the utter folly of leaving before a performance you have paid to see has even begun, and also begged her not to make a scene, she afterwards said I had allowed her to be insulted without resenting it?

I objected to the fellow quite as much as she did, but what could I have done? If I had told him to hold his tongue he would probably have sworn at me, and we should have had everybody staring at us. If I had called the attendant there would have been a row which perhaps might have ended in a visit to a police court; and a visit to a police court, even as a witness, always costs money or business time, which is the same thing.

Luckily just then the curtain went up, and for a short time the Objectionable One became absorbed in the play. It soon became clear, however, that he had not been educated up to the Irreproachable standard. He yawned and began to fidget, in spite of the indignant looks of the devotees on either side of him.

"Say, governor," he said at last, turning round to me. "What's it all about?"

"Hush!" I said. "You will find the motive explained on the back of your programme."

He made some pithy but rude remarks to the effect that he'd be dashed if a drama which had to be explained on the programme would go down on his side the water, and then opened a running fire of vulgar but forcible criticism of what was said and done on the stage. As he turned to me every time he spoke, I thought the people

around would begin to imagine that I sympathised with him, so I lent him my opera-glasses to keep him quiet.

"Oh, crikey!" he exclaimed in what, on his side the water, no doubt passes for a confidential whisper. "Look at the old geeser in that box. Disgraceful, I call it, and at her age too. Just take a squint, governor."

Sophy might have known that I should do nothing of the kind, even though to humour him I made a pretence, and therefore she need not have snatched the glasses away from me and hidden them under her cloak.

As the first act of "Gentle Gladys" is devoted solely to detailing the pedigrees of all the characters for the last ten generations, so that you may understand why they are compelled to act as they do later on, it is a short one, and before the Objectionable Character had time to distinguish himself again, the curtain went down and he went out, probably for beer.

All through the act the few remarks which Sophy had condescended to address to me had had an acid flavour about them that I did not relish, and, as she showed no signs of returning to sweet reasonableness when the interval began, for once in my life I was glad to see—Barker.

"Hullo! Swaddle," he said, coming from behind somewhere, and appropriating the temporarily vacant place in front of me. "What are you doing here?"

Wherever I meet Barker he asks me what I am doing there, in a tone which implies that I have no right to be anywhere without his leave.

"Oh!" I replied, "nothing much. I brought Miss Bell, that's all."

"Ah! Miss Bell," he said, treating Sophy to a stare which began in curiosity and ended in admiration. "I haven't the pleasure, I fear. Introduce me, Swaddle, my boy."

I introduced him—what else could I do?—and I hoped Sophy would snub him; but again she disappointed me.

"I have often heard of you, Mr. Barker," she said, smiling upon him most graciously.

"Nothing to my disadvantage, I hope!" he replied, laughing, as if he thought that very simple remark concealed an excellent joke. Barker always laughed at his own jokes, and they were generally very well concealed.

"Not at all," said Sophy. "Algernon

has always spoken so highly of you that I have been quite anxious to make your acquaintance."

How easy it is to be deceived in a woman! How could she have been anxious to make his acquaintance after the things I had told her about him? And yet, up to that moment, I had always thought sincerity was one of Sophy's greatest charms.

"Swaddle, you are a sly, sly dog," said Barker, chuckling idiotically. "Do you know, Miss Bell, that, until this suspicious moment, I was ignorant of your very existence."

"I am not surprised to hear it, Mr. Barker," retorted Sophy, tossing her head. "Algernon is not at all proud of me, I can assure you."

A more unfounded accusation never proceeded from a woman's lips, yet I could not refute it without laying myself open to an equally groundless charge of jealousy.

I had not told Barker of my engagement, it is true, but that was because he is such an interfering beggar. "Ah!" he would have said, "I must know the little girl, Swaddle. You must settle down somewhere near my diggings so that I can look you up in the evening. I know the very house to suit you. Where are you buying your furniture? I know a place——" and so on. Indeed, he would have made me play second fiddle at my very wedding if he had been asked to it, and surely it is not jealousy to object to that?

They both looked at me as if they expected an explanation, but as I could not tell Barker my reasons for reticence there was an awkward pause in the conversation. I felt that Barker had once more placed me in a false position, and when I feel that I am in a false position I always blush, and often say something which on reflection I regret. I was blushing and was about to speak when the Objectionable Character saved me by coming back to claim his seat.

According to the etiquette prevailing in galleries Barker should have yielded it to him, and perhaps he would have done so had not Sophy told him in a whisper to stay where he was.

"'Ere, governor," said the Objectionable One, "that's my pitch."

His tone, I must admit, was not conciliatory, and Barker is a man who must be treated to an ell of conciliation before he will yield an inch of concession.

"Is it?" he asked. "I was under the impression that, like the rest of the theatre, it belonged to Mr. Crumple Delawnay."

"Was you?" sneered the other. "Well, I was a-sitting in it, anyway, during the whole of the first act; I appeal to this lady and gentleman if I wasn't?"

Barker made no reply, but beckoned to the attendant.

"Are these seats reserved?" he asked calmly.

"Well, no, sir," replied the man. "Not strictly speaking, they're not. But when a gent goes out for a mouthful of fresh air or what not, it ain't considered the thing to jump in his place in his absence."

"Never mind about that," said Barker. "Is the right to find it empty when he returns included in the price of admission?"

"No, sir," admitted the attendant. "Not the right exactly, but——"

"That will do, thank you," said Barker, coolly sitting down again.

"'Ere, I say," grumbled the previous occupier, "that's not good enough, you know. You're a precious sight too big and ugly for there to be any sense in me talking of chucking you out, but if——"

"Now, look here," said Barker, turning round; "if you had asked me civilly to move I would have done so with pleasure, but you didn't, so I won't. Stop. Don't use bad language before ladies, but take this, and think yourself lucky to get it."

"This" was a shilling, and the Character took it and departed, muttering some nonsense about being glad to find that, after all, the gent was a gent, and knew how to behave as such.

The people round about laughed, and seemed to think Barker had done something clever, though where the cleverness came in I failed to perceive. Any one can bribe a lout, but if Sophy had seconded my policy of conciliation as she ought to have done, there would have been no need to waste money or make ourselves conspicuous.

Of course, we were conspicuous after that altercation, which, as Barker was concerned in it, had not, you may be sure, been carried on in whispers. Everybody stared at us, or I thought they did, which, as far as destroying my comfort went, came to the same thing. Barker, too, behaved disgracefully throughout the rest of the performance. He did his best to flirt with Sophy, who, however, did not encourage him, but though she kept saying,

"Don't, Mr. Barker," "You shouldn't say such things," and "Do be quiet," he went on saying the things—jokes he thinks them—and he wouldn't be quiet. He talked to the girls next to him, whom I am sure he had never seen before, and, though they had so plainly resented the advances of the Objectionable Character, they didn't seem to mind Barker a bit, while even the devotees, as I have called them, smiled indulgently at him when he made fun of the play.

How is it that Barker can do such things with impunity? If I had talked to those girls, which of course I would not have done without an introduction, they would probably have snubbed me, and if they hadn't Sophy would have been vexed, yet she simply beamed on Barker. As for the other people, they would have told me they had paid to listen to the actors, or something equally cutting, yet they let Barker chatter on without a murmur. How is it, I say?

But to proceed. The drama dragged itself to an end at last. The educationally acquired gentleness of Gladys proved too weak to withstand her natural tendency to homicidal mania inherited from her maternal great-grandfather, who once, when in liquor, shot a man of the Barker species. She killed all her husbands—she had three, I think—and most of her children, and was led off to durance more or less vile, while the few surviving characters shook their heads and sighed. Then the curtain went down and we went out, to catch, as I thought, a 'bus for our suburb; but I reckoned without Barker.

"Now, you two would like a bit of supper?" said he.

"Oh! yes, Algernon, please. I am so hungry," exclaimed Sophy, who always was inclined to speak impulsively.

"My dear," I remonstrated, "there is no time. The last 'bus leaves St. Paul's Churchyard at eleven-thirty."

"St. Paul's Churchyard!" broke in Barker in his overbearing way. "What on earth is the man talking about? Your 'buses pass this corner."

"Oh! Mr. Barker. Don't you know we save a penny each by walking to St. Paul's?" said Sophy, very properly, I thought.

Barker burst into his brutal laugh. Though anxiety to save a penny is not a thing to laugh at, I was not surprised—at Barker—but why did Sophy laugh too? Really, women are incomprehensible.

"Oh! hang the expense for once," he said. "You can get up here and I'll stand the extra two d. There'll be lots of time."

I shuddered as I thought of the number of trains I had been dragged into by the collar all through Barker's idea of the period of time that amounted to "lots."

"But all the Perforated Bun places are closed," I objected.

"Oh! bother perforated buns," retorted Barker. "It's my birthday, man, and, if Miss Bell graciously consents, we will sup to-night on something stronger than a perforated bun. The 'Gargantuan' is just opposite."

It was not Barker's birthday, unless he had one in March as well as August, and though the "Gargantuan" was just opposite, I do not approve of that luxurious restaurant. It is perfectly respectable, of course, but—but—well, I don't think it is exactly suited to people of limited, if sufficient, incomes and quiet tastes, especially when they are about to marry. Its spaciousness, and its decorations, and its waiters and appointments generally, tend to make a girl discontented with the humble neatness of her future home. It was all very well for Barker to say, and Sophy to agree with him, that it was only once in a way; but there is a proverb about the thin end of the wedge, and even as we crossed the Strand to reach the "Gargantuan" I was full of dismal forebodings that Sophy would some day ask me to take her there again.

I didn't enjoy my supper a bit. We only had steak and bitter beer, and I wondered how Barker dare order such simple fare from such a waiter in such a gorgeous saloon. I was sure that waiter and some of the customers, too, were laughing at us because we were not in evening dress. Of course it wasn't done openly; waiters seem to know by instinct that Barker will tip them, and our man was outwardly most polite, but I doubted his sincerity.

Sophy, too, behaved badly, or perhaps I should say foolishly. Evidently unconscious of the ridiculous figure we were cutting, she seemed delighted with everything, and showed her delight so plainly that everybody must have noticed she was not used to that sort of thing.

"Isn't this nice, Algernon?" she said. "Why didn't you bring me here the last time?"

"Hush!" I whispered. "Don't speak

so loud. Those people at the next table are listening to every word we say."

Then she laughed and turned to Barker.

"Mr. Barker," she said, "don't you think Algernon is painfully shy?"

I was sure the waiter heard that, so I blushed and looked at her reproachfully, but without effect. The thoughtless girl joined forces with Barker, and they teased me till I could hardly eat.

I hate being teased, and I am afraid I lost my temper, but just as I was going to say something sharp we finished, or at least they did, so I rose hastily from the table and made for the door. Barker had taken off his overcoat, quite heedless of the probability of having to tip a second waiter for helping him to put it on again, and so he could not follow me immediately. Sophy did, but when we got to the vestibule she proposed that we should wait there for Barker, as it seemed rude to leave him.

My nerves had been so completely upset that I didn't care what it seemed, and I told her she could stop if she liked, but I was going down the steps to look for a 'bus. I went, and she stayed, staring about her in an independent way as if the place belonged to her. I felt somewhat relieved when I reached the bottom step, and so escaped to some extent from the curious gaze of the people lounging about the vestibule. Barker has told me scores of times that people do not look at me, and that my fear that they do is nothing but fancy. But, if it is, what difference does that make? The fancy, if you believe in it, is as bad as the reality.

Now, Sophy is a very pretty girl, and standing about alone as she was—entirely through her own fault, of course—she became a mark for all eyes, and presently some half-tipsy fellow came up and spoke to her. She looked at him indignantly, and he not only spoke again, but caught her by the arm. Then she screamed—she is just the sort of girl who puts herself in the way of unpleasantness, and then screams when it comes—and I remained on the bottom step in an agony of nervousness as to what would happen next.

I should have hastened to her help, but the man was very big, and as he was in evening dress, I felt sure the sympathies of the bystanders would be with him. I did not want to get into trouble, either, and I felt that Sophy was almost rightly served for staying there. Nevertheless, I hesitated, and I really believe that I

should have risked the consequences and gone to her in another second, but up came Barker and asked the fellow what the devil—Barker sometimes uses very violent language; I have often told him he should be more careful—he meant by insulting a lady.

I failed to catch the reply, but it must have been unsatisfactory, for Barker promptly knocked him down. Then the manager came, and for a moment I thought that Barker, who has no discrimination when he is angry, would knock him down, too; but he contented himself with threatening to complain to the police about the way in which the "Gargantuan" was conducted. I thought the manager would have given Barker into custody, but he actually apologised to him, and ordered the other man off the premises.

Then Barker and Sophy came down the steps, he swelling like a turkey-cock, and she rather pale but apparently proud of him.

"Sophy," I said, "do make haste, or we shall miss the last 'bus.'"

"Mr. Barker," said she, ignoring me altogether, "will you see me safely home? I am sorry to trouble you, but——"

"Don't mention it, Miss Bell," he interrupted—I think he is the rudest man I know—and they straightway got into a hansom and left me standing there.

I have not seen Sophy since. She told me, by letter, that I had behaved like a coward, and that she was very glad she had discovered my real nature before trusting herself to my care for life. The accusation was false, of course—I was only nervous—but I did not condescend to explain as, after all, married life would have been expensive. I fancy Barker finds it so—he has married Sophy—for he is not half as free with his money as he used to be. He is still the bane of my existence, though. Just at present he keeps bothering me to come down and have a look at his fat, and let bygones be bygones.

I hate babies—they make me nervous, especially when they cry—and of course I shall have to buy something for Barker's; but for the sake of peace in the office I suppose I shall have to go some day.

BEHIND THE SCENES IN PARIS.

DURING the reign of Louis Philippe, and in the early days of the Second Empire, it was comparatively easy for a foreigner, hold-

ing a recognised social position in Paris, to obtain an occasional admission to the coulisses of the Opéra and the Comédie Française. An introduction to the manager of the former theatre from a privileged "habitué" was a sufficient passport to the sanctum, while an acquaintance with any leading member of the latter establishment served—at least, for once—as an "Open Sesame" to the "foyer" of the house of Molière.

The great attraction of the Opéra to the initiated—I am speaking, of course, of the old house in the Rue Lepelletier—was the "foyer de la danse," a large room adjoining the ancient Hôtel Choiseul, badly lit, and furnished with semicircular benches for the accommodation of the danseuses. The floor was sloping, and at certain distances iron rods were fixed in the wall, upon which the fair votaries of Terpsichore rested one foot while standing on the other, in order to render their limbs pliant and supple. A marble bust of Mdlle. Guimard, on a pedestal of painted wood, was the chief ornament of the room. About an hour before the commencement of the ballet, the preparatory exercises in the "foyer" began; and in another half-hour most of the leading artists were assembled there, employing the short time previous to the rising of the curtain in practising their steps and "entrechats."

When I first knew Paris, Taglioni had left the Opéra, and Fanny Elssler reigned supreme; the triumphant success, however, obtained by her in the "Diable Boiteux," financially advantageous as it proved to the management, was by no means relished by her lady colleagues, who, finding themselves during the long run of the ballet completely shelved, unscrupulously profited by any mode of annoying and embarrassing their obnoxious rival. One evening Burat de Gurgy, author of the libretto, knocked at the door of the charming dancer's dressing-room, and found her in a great state of excitement.

"My dear Monsieur Burat," she exclaimed, "I am in a terrible rage. I have scarcely time to dress, and some one has stolen my chalk."

"Your chalk!" began Burat.

"Not a doubt of it. I have asked everybody for some, and they all say they have none. It is a conspiracy, you see, to hinder me from dancing. So now, M. Burat, you will get me some, will you not?"

"But, my dear lady, I don't know where to go for it."

"Make haste," insisted Fanny, "I will pay whatever you like, but I must have it. You have just a quarter of an hour before the curtain rises, and I shall expect you."

It was then eleven o'clock, and all the shops were shut, consequently M. Burat was highly perplexed what to do. However, at last he returned, bringing five little bits of chalk, but looking extremely doleful.

"Enfin!" cried Mdlle. Elssler triumphantly. "You are indeed a friend in need. What do I owe you?"

"Twenty-five sous for five glasses of execrable Cognac," was his answer. "I have been obliged to go to five cafés in order to steal the chalk from the billiard-tables."

Albéric Second, in his amusing volume, "Les Petits Mystères de l'Opéra," gives a droll account of his first appearance behind the scenes of that theatre, not knowing a soul in the place, and unpleasantly conscious that everybody was staring at him:

"I never felt so ill at ease in my life," he says; "it seemed as if my presence among the 'fine fleur' of dandies and diplomats must necessarily be regarded as an intrusion, and a glance at my own modest evening attire, the handiwork of an unfashionable tailor, only served to increase my embarrassment. Presently, to my horror, I discovered that a group of more or less young, more or less pretty girls, appertaining, as I afterwards learnt, to the sisterhood of 'rats,' who for some minutes had been peering curiously in my direction, were gradually approaching nearer and nearer to me, and exchanging sundry unflattering remarks which I could not help overhearing."

"Who is he?" asked one.

"Nobody 'chic,' at all events," replied another. "The cut of his coat dates from the year before last."

"Have any of 'ces Messieurs' bowed to him?" enquired a third.

"Not likely!" said a fourth. "He looks as if he had been smuggled in by one of the firemen."

"I think you are rather hard on the poor man," interposed a fifth. "He must be somebody, or he wouldn't be here."

"This suggestion apparently impressed her companions, and the tide was evidently turning in my favour, when a stately damsel suddenly joined the group."

"Stay!" exclaimed the first speaker,

'here is Héloïse Florentin, who has all Paris worth knowing at her fingers' ends. She will tell us who he is.'

"Then ensued a perfect Babel of questions. 'Is he rich?' 'A diplomat?' 'The son of a peer of France?' 'A Cæsar of the Bourse?'

"'Nothing of the sort,' replied Héloïse, surveying me contemptuously. 'Only a journalist.'

"No sooner had the word passed her lips than a general stampede took place, the little band of 'coryphées' and 'rats' dispersed as if by magic, and vanished from my sight, leaving me as solitary as Crusoe on his island, without even a Friday to fall back upon."

The "foyer" of the Comédie Française, as I remember it, had nothing in common with that of the Académie Royale—or Impériale, as the case might be—de Musique. It was a well-proportioned and handsomely furnished apartment, at the door of which, in accordance with traditional usage, stood a "huissier" with a silver chain round his neck; the walls were decorated with portraits of bygone theatrical celebrities, choice samples of the unrivalled collection adorning every room and corridor of the spacious building. Contrary to the incessant noise and bustle perpetually characterising the operative coulisses, all was strictly decorous and sedate; the visitor to the "foyer" of the Théâtre Français might well have imagined himself entering a salon rather than a green-room, were it not for the costumes of the performers awaiting their summons to the stage.

If the name of Provost—the best representative of Arnolphe in "L'Ecole des Femmes" I ever saw—happened to be in the bill of the evening, it was almost a foregone conclusion that, after resuming the attire of ordinary life, he would be found engaged in a game of chess with Alfred de Musset or some other equally able antagonist; Samson and the mercurial Regnier might be seen gravely discussing the claims of some aspirant to the coveted rank of "sociétaire"; while in a snug corner of the room Augustine Brohan drew a select circle round her, listening with delight to her inimitable repartees. Now and then, in Louis Philippe's time, an official of the Court would drop in, among others M. de Montalivet, a "masher" of his day, and a great admirer of the charming Mlle. Plessy; and I have heard it recorded—I do not guarantee the fact, but

tell the tale as it was told to me—that on one occasion this urbane and courtly nobleman, after casting a disappointed glance round the room, enquired of the tragedian Beauvallet, who was standing near him, "Mais où est donc Mlle. Plessy?"

Beauvallet, who could have given points to Othello for rudeness of speech, instead of replying that the lady was at her toilet, thought fit to employ a term more applicable to house-painting than to the delicate embellishment of a pretty face, and, coolly surveying his questioner, blurted out in his gruffest tone:

"Elle se badigeonne!"

As far as the minor temples of Theatrum were concerned, admission behind the scenes was, as a rule, strictly prohibited; certain privileged dramatists and influential journalists, who rarely profited by the permission, being alone allowed to penetrate beyond the stage door. Take, for example, the four vaudeville theatres, each of which was guarded by a lynx-eyed female Cerberus who, pouncing from her den upon the unauthorised intruder, effectually barred his further progress. Of these four strongholds the Gymnase was perhaps the most difficult to invade, the defence being superintended by the stage-manager, Monval, whose ubiquitous watchfulness nothing could escape. A sharp look-out for strangers was also enjoined at the Vaudeville, which once, and only once, I succeeded in evading on the fictitious plea of an appointment with manager Bouffé—not the actor of that name—whom I had never seen in my life. My stay, however, in the forbidden precincts was limited to a few minutes, during which I had a flying glance at Madame Doche's pretty dressing-room, a miniature boudoir, richly carpeted and ornamented with water-colour drawings, and could distinctly hear the voice of Félix heaping all kinds of obnoxious epithets on his unfortunate coiffeur; when some one whispered in my ear a friendly warning, and I made a hasty exit just in time to avoid an unpleasant interview with stage-manager Hippolyte.

Of the Palais Royal, where, thanks to the courtesy of the director, I was on the free list, I have already spoken, and need, therefore, only add that the "foyer" was a long, low, and narrow room like the cabin of a steamer, with no single article of furniture in it beyond a clock and a row of benches against the wall; adjoining it was a sort of wire cage wherein sat the "régisseur," while the manager's private

den and the dressing-rooms of the ladies were approached by a tiny staircase descending into the bowels of the earth.

Somewhere about 1850 my late friend, John Bowes, the Nestor of the English turf, who had been many years a resident in Paris, invested part of his large fortune in the purchase of the Variétés Theatre, and placed an ex-actor named Thibaudeau, formerly known as Milon in the company of the Odéon, at the head of it. No sooner had Bowes come into possession than my "entrées" both before and behind the curtain were secured to me, and many a pleasant hour have I passed in what might then have been truly called a model Parisian green-room. It was not large nor particularly well furnished, beyond the regulation clock and benches and two or three chairs; but there was always a blazing fire in winter, which attracted a certain number of dramatists and critics. Alphonse Royer, the manager of the Opéra and part author of "La Favorite," was a frequent visitor, as also were the Neapolitan Fiorentino, Lambert Thiboust, Duvert—Arnal's universal provider—and Arsène de Cey.

Thibaudeau's first, and, indeed, only success was "La Vie de Bohême," cleverly adapted from Murger's popular work; it was well cast, Charles Pérey playing Schaunard; Marguerite Thuillier, a delightful actress who unfortunately died young, Mimi; and Adèle Page Musette. For several weeks it drew good houses, but as the receipts gradually diminished, and two or three hastily got-up novelties signally failed, it was thought expedient to try a change of management, and a M. Carpier was appointed, but proved even more incompetent than his predecessor. At last, thoroughly disgusted with theatrical matters, Bowes made over the property to M. Hippolyte Cogniard, formerly manager of the Porte St. Martin, and joint author with his brother Théodore of the fairy spectacle "La Biche au bois."

The new lessee set to work in earnest, and in a very short time his company, carefully weeded and judiciously augmented, became one of the best and most attractive in Paris. The engagements of Arnal and Numa, two of the most popular comedians of the day, proved highly advantageous to the treasury; the first-named bringing with him "Le Supplice de Tantale," an irresistibly comic extravaganza by the inevitable Duvert and Lauzanne. Later on, I witnessed the triumph of Charles Mathews in "Un Anglais timide,"

and the earliest essays of a young actress, then patiently modulating her voice according to the requirements of a vaudeville theatre, and gradually feeling her way up the ladder of fame, but destined in after years to become the acknowledged heroine of opéra bouffe. Need I name Hortense Schneider?

"OUTLAWED"

A SHORT SERIAL.

CHAPTER XV.

A WHOLE week went by before the final preparations for Wilfred's escape could be carried out. Then Gilbert went up to town to see his friend, to make the last arrangements. He was recalled by a telegram the next morning. His father, whom he had left better, had had a sudden relapse, and the doctors had given up all hope.

He could not reach Meadowlands till late that evening. His father was still alive, though sinking fast. He had relapsed into unconsciousness. There was just a possibility that he might recognise them again before the end. Neither Mrs. Egerton nor Gilbert would leave the room, fearing lest this return to consciousness might take place in their absence.

Wilfred was to leave the place that night, and to make his way in disguise across country to Southampton, where he was to join the steamer, at the moment of her sailing. Every detail had been thought out with the greatest care. That night Gilbert was to take him a sum of money sufficient for his expenses for some time. Arrangements were to be made to let him have more later on. So innate was Gilbert's distrust of his brother, that he would not let the money pass out of his own keeping till the last moment.

His father, the doctors said, would not last till midnight; there would be time enough then to go to his brother, who was to leave the house between one and two in the morning.

After dinner Hope slipped away to carry the last news of the sick-room to Wilfred. She hurried through the grounds, terrified at every rustle of the leaves.

If only every one had not been too much occupied the last two days with the increasing weakness of Mr. Egerton, they might have noticed that a great change had taken place in her. But Gilbert, who

would not have failed to see it, had been away, and the others had not thought of her in the subdued hurry and confusion. There was a strange, frightened expression in her eyes, and the drawn, pinched look about her mouth showed the signs of some severe mental struggle. In some curious way all the girlishness seemed to have vanished, and left her a suffering woman.

The unthinking fearlessness of ignorant innocence had gone. She was afraid, with the bitter knowledge that comes of a sense of wrong-doing. Every sound startled her. She could hardly bear to meet Mrs. Egerton's glance, troubled and preoccupied though it was with the thought of her husband. She did not dare think any more of her father.

In spite of love's arguments—pleading caresses, in spite of the wonderful glamour that Wilfred Egerton's eloquence could cast over the life that was to begin for them, in her secret heart lay always the conviction of sin. Away from him she could feel it. She was on the verge of doing a great wrong. She knew it! It was only in his presence that she could lose sense of the torturing conviction.

When she reached the summer-house she saw him waiting for her by the door. His recklessness always terrified her. Who could tell what eyes might be watching from the shadow of the bushes? It seemed to her sometimes that this callous indifference to danger was rather the recklessness of a desperate man than mere courage.

To-night she was more terrified than ever, and though he laughed at her fears, he yielded at last to her entreaties and they went back together to the underground chamber. It was reached by a skilfully contrived entrance among the blocks of rock which formed the background of the summer-house. Overgrown with shrub and creepers as they were, with a little care any one could enter or leave with small fear of observation; while one of the blocks of stone, moving on a pivot, effectually hid the entrance to the chamber below. It had cost Wilfred Egerton considerable time and ingenuity to repair the old machinery which worked the stone. The chamber itself was reached by a flight of worn stone steps.

So well hidden was the entrance in the midst of the blocks of rocks and thick shrubbery growing up between them, that Wilfred often left the entrance open to allow the fresh air to enter the room. To-night the heat was oppressive. The

atmosphere of the chamber, heated still further by the lamp that they were always compelled to keep burning, was suffocating, and he left the opening unclosed behind them.

He glanced at her when they reached the room, and drew her to him.

"Dear!" he said, "you are not sorry! It is not yet too late. Only tell me, and I will go away alone!"

With his arm about her, his sad voice in her ears, the love and the pity he had awakened in her sprang into passionate devotion again.

"Oh! No, no! Only I am such a coward! And it is father! Oh, what will he say? Dear, dear father!" and she hid her face against his heart, crying bitterly over the father's love which she was betraying.

"Dearest—it is only for a week or two! Then you can write. He will forgive you—though he will hardly forgive me!"

"Oh! Yes, yes; he must! When he knows that I care for you—but, oh, Wilfred, if only I might have told him first!" with a last appeal in her voice.

He did not answer it, but sat looking with dark eyes across her bent head, a set expression on his pale mouth.

"And your father, too, Wilfred! It seems too dreadful to go to-night."

Something troubled his face for an instant. Then it passed and the rigid ruthlessness returned.

"I must go to-night. It is my only chance!" he said in a quick, short voice. "And my father disowns me."

Then after a pause:

"Hope," he said, "look up at me for a moment."

She raised her head. He took her face between his hands and looked down for an instant into her tear-stained eyes.

She did not flush as she usually did under his gaze. She looked straight back into his eyes, her face as pale as his, her mouth wearied and suffering.

Then he bent and kissed her.

"Go away now," he said gently, "and try and get some rest. You remember all you have to do, and you will not be afraid? You can trust Ned Molloy. And, little one, if I should fail to come—but I shall not fail," as he saw the dumb terror that flashed into her eyes, "only if it should happen so—I have told Molloy to take you back to your father. There, not another word. Good-bye. Give me one of those roses you are wearing."

After she had gone he paced to and fro through the narrow chamber, for inaction was intolerable.

He forced himself to put aside the thought of Hope. But the pale face with its questioning eyes haunted him. And at last he, with an impatience that was still half gentle, took the white rose from his coat where he had placed it and laid it aside. He fancied that its delicate fragrance evoked her memory.

"There are ghosts enough without that, and though they don't take up too much room, and a man can cram a good many into his life, they are inconvenient things to cart about," he thought.

He had made his own plans for escape that night.

He had not the slightest intention of making use of the projects his brother had formed for him. Besides, he had been growing anxious at the delay.

Twice recently he had fancied he had seen a figure lurking in the dark among the trees near the summer-house. It might only have been a shadow, but he had not ventured to inspect it more closely, as on both occasions he believed that he had been himself unobserved.

Only the evening before he had seen, from inside the summer-house itself, Maria Jenkins, standing looking at the clump of rocks and foliage with a curious, intent expression which he did not like.

She had passed on after a few moments. But he could not rid himself of the impression that there was something else besides mere curiosity in her gaze.

The place would sooner or later be discovered. And he was so sick to death of it; so savagely enraged against his imprisonment, his rat-in-a-hole existence. Even a bullet through his brain would be a better alternative than another week of this torture.

And suppose his father died! To-night! But for that last miserable transaction, which had at last brought him under the vengeance of the law, he would, instead of being an outlaw with every man's hand against him, hunted down till there was no spot on earth safe for him, be entering into free possession of a splendid property. He could even have thought of settling down in the place and taking up the rôle of a respectable country gentleman; a year or two of absence might have white-washed him sufficiently to satisfy the elastic code of society morality.

He laughed as he thought of it, but the

scoff died away abruptly, and with an oath he put the thought from him.

The time passed drearily enough. But for the fact that Gilbert was to bring him the necessary money, he would not have waited. But he could not carry out his own plans without the means that Gilbert was to procure for him. His intention was to allow Gilbert to imagine that he was accepting his conditions and arrangements, and, then, when he had the money in his possession, to carry out his own original schemes. But till then he was powerless.

In fierce impatience and desperation, a thought struck him that if his father had died a few hours sooner he might not have been so dependent on his brother's aid as he was. The money would have been his own. But even he shrank from the thought as it flashed into his brain.

"Heaven! I'm playing it pretty low down," he said savagely.

But it was nearly one o'clock before Gilbert came.

Wilfred's first glance into his brother's face told him what had happened.

"He's dead?" he said.

"Yes." And they both thought of the change their father's death made in the position of one of them.

Only it had come too late!

"And the sooner I clear out to let you reign in my stead the better you and the 'unco guid' will like it," said Wilfred, with a short laugh of concentrated bitterness. "I say," he added, as Gilbert did not speak, "what a good thing it was for you that that poor little beggar didn't live. How mad you were at the marriage, and how hard you tried for the sake of 'the family pride' to hush up that unlucky connexion; but it seems to me, looking back, that that was about the most decent thing I did in my life," with another laugh.

Gilbert made a gesture. That his brother should bring up now, at such a moment, that wretched affair, when, as a young fellow at College, he had married a ballet girl, seemed to him all a part of the shameless heartlessness and depravity that had ruled his life.

The marriage had been kept quiet at the cost of great expense and trouble, but the entanglement, which had been an open scandal, had led to Wilfred's being expelled from College.

The child of the marriage had died soon after it was born. Mr. Egerton had pro-

vided for the wife, an ignorant girl, on the condition that she kept herself out of sight and sound of the family. That anything might have been done to improve her had not entered into the Egerton calculations. They looked on her as a low, vulgar adventuress, and the only interview Mr. Egerton had ever had with her had appalled him. Yet, under her vulgarity and ignorance, there had been possibilities.

There was a curious look in Wilfred Egerton's eyes as they rested for a second on his brother's face.

"We acted by her more fairly than you," said Gilbert hoarsely. "You left her to starve."

"I couldn't afford to keep her, and though you wouldn't do anything to help me, I knew you would do what you could for her. The family justice is as well balanced as its pride," with a sneer. But there was a touch of pain in the dark eyes.

"Good Heaven! You're a devil!" exclaimed his brother hoarsely, thinking the sneer was levelled at their dead father. Whether the woman was dead or alive, at least he had done his duty by her. Gilbert flung down on the table a bundle of notes and a paper of written instructions. "If you're not out of this in half an hour I won't answer for the consequences."

Wilfred gathered up the notes with another of those strange slow glances at his brother. Did he take Hope into his calculations in his haste to get rid of him?

"You mean you'll hand me over to the police?"

Half an hour! He would be out of the place in five minutes. It was haunted by a hundred ghosts and devils. It seemed possible that at any moment he might see his father standing before him; only dead, with dead eyes, and dead lips, and dead ears—never more to see, nor speak words of forgiveness, nor listen to words of remorse.

Half an hour! By that time Hope would be safe on her way. She was to have left the house about midnight. She would not be needed in the sick-room whatever happened. By half-past one, under the care of Molloy, she would be in the train on her way to Glasgow. He would start at once. He thought of his mother. But for the moment he felt that he would prefer not to face her either.

On the table lay a case containing a brace of pistols. He had been cleaning them. He put one into his pocket, and then, without a word to his brother, walked towards the stairs leading to the grounds. But just as he reached them, the oak door at the farther end of the room swung open, and Mrs. Page, her face pale with fright and horror, ran into the room.

"Mr. Wilfred! oh, Mr. Wilfred!" she cried, "say you've had nothing to do with it! You, with your wife living! And you know it! But Miss Hope! She went to bed early, with a bad headache, and she looked so ill, that I have just been to her room, to see if she were all right—and she has gone—and there's a letter to her father. Mr. Wilfred—you wouldn't do that—"

Gilbert, who had stood for the first moment like one stunned, thrust her aside, and snatching up the other pistol from the table, covered his brother. His face was livid, his eyes ablaze, all the bitterness, shame, and contempt of years culminating in this one supreme moment, when his father lay dead, struck down by his brother's sins, and the woman he loved was shamed by his brother's evil passion.

"Where is she?" he cried hoarsely, half-choked with murderous fury.

Wilfred, as his brother seized the pistol, snatched out his own.

"Tell me—or by Heaven—"

There was a sharp, almost simultaneous crash, Wilfred hesitating an imperceptible instant as a faint sound behind him caught his ear, and at the same instant making a half-unconscious movement. It probably unsteadied his aim.

It was all over in a second. As the smoke cleared off, Mrs. Page, who had uttered a shrill, unheeded cry of agonised remembrance, saw Wilfred lying at the foot of the steps leading up to the grounds above, while Gilbert, the smoking revolver in his hand, leant back against the table with closed eyes and a look on his face, which for an instant she mistook for death.

And then, as she ran towards Wilfred another scream broke from her lips. She saw Dornton swing himself down from the ladder to the side of Wilfred, and kneel by him. But he was a moment too late. Wilfred Egerton was dead.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"ROMAYNE, at last! By Jove, old man, we thought you were going to throw us over!"

The voice, a young man's voice, struck out, as it were, from an indescribable medley of incongruous sound. The background was formed by the lightest and most melodious dance music, produced solely from stringed instruments; lutes and guitars seemed to predominate, and the result had a character and rhythm of its own which was essentially graceful, picturesque, and Italian; against the background, a high-pitched discord compounded of every imaginable key, there clashed a very babel of tongues—the eminently unmusical voice of modern society, with all its faults of modulation and pronunciation, blended into a whole full of a character absolutely incompatible with the old-time southern harmonies with which it mingled.

The speaker's figure, as he stopped suddenly in a hurried passage across the room, stood out from a blaze of colour, light, and gorgeousness of every description, which fell without pause or cessation into ever fresh combination, as the beautifully dressed crowd moved to and fro in its magnificent setting. And the spectacle presented to the eye was as curiously jarring, as strikingly suggestive of the ludicrous inconsistencies of dream-land, as were the sounds that saluted the ear. There was hardly a man or woman to be seen whose dress was not as faithful

a copy of the costume prevalent among the Florentine nobles under the magnificent rule of the Medici as time and money could make it. There was not a false note in the surroundings; money had been poured out like water in order that a perfect reproduction of an old Florentine palace might be achieved; and as far as art could go nothing was left to be desired. The fault lay with nature. The old Italians doubtless had their own mannerisms, possibly their own vulgarities, of carriage, gesture, and general demeanour, but theirs were not the mannerisms and vulgarities of modern "smart" society. The very perfection of every inanimate detail seemed to accentuate the discrepancy of every movement, gesture, and attitude of the life that informed it, throwing the strongly marked characteristics of the two periods thus forced into juxtaposition in an absolutely grotesque relief.

The young man who had greeted Julian exemplified in his own person all the preposterous incongruity of the whole. His dress was a marvel of correctness to the minutest detail. Its wearer's face was of the heavy, inanimate, bull-dog type; his movement as he shook hands with Julian was an exaggerated specimen of the approved affectation of the moment; his speech was clipped and drawled after the most approved model among "mashers." He was the son of the house, and there was a kind of slow excitement about his manner struggling with a nonchalant carelessness which he evidently wished to present to the world as his mental attitude of the moment. There was a note of excitement also in the medley of voices about him. The "affair" was "a huge go"—as the young man himself would have expressed it. And neither he nor

any one of his father's guests was troubled for one instant by any sense of the ludicrousness of the effect produced.

Julian had that instant entered the room and had paused on the threshold. There is perhaps no type of costume more picturesque in its magnificence than that of the Italian noble of the Middle Ages—this is perhaps the reason why it has been so extensively vulgarised—and Julian's dress was an admirable specimen of its kind, rich, graceful, and becoming. There was a subtle difference between his bearing and that of his host, though Julian's demeanour, too, was modern to the finest shade. He wore the dress well, with none of the other man's awkwardness, but on the contrary with an absolute ease and unconsciousness which implied a certain excited tension of nerve. His face was colourless and very hard; but upon the hardness there was a mask of animation and gaiety which was all-sufficient for the present occasion.

"I'm awfully sorry, dear boy!" he said now, lightly and eagerly, and with an exaggerated gesture of deprecation. "It's horribly late, I know! Give you my word I couldn't help it! By Jove, what a magnificent thing you've made of this!"

The other glanced round with a satisfaction which he tried in vain to repress.

"Not so bad, is it?" he said carelessly. "Only these fellows are such fools, even the best of them; they always blunder if they can." With this wholesale condemnation of the workmen among whom, some fifty years ago, his grandfather might have been found, he screwed his eyeglass into his eye, serenely unconscious of the comic effect produced, for the better contemplation of a pretty girl at the farther end of the room. "Lady Pamela looks awfully fit, doesn't she?" he observed parenthetically; continuing almost in the same breath: "The gardens are the best part, seems to me. Awfully like the real thing, don't you know!"

Julian's only direct answer was an expressive gesture of appreciation and apology.

"Awfully well done!" he said. "Excuse me, dear boy, I see my mother, and she'll want to know why I've not turned up before. I must go and explain."

His companion laughed; the laugh was rather derisive, and the glance he cast on Julian through his eyeglass was stupidly inquisitive and incredulous.

"What a fellow you are, Romaine!" he

said. "They ought to put you in a glass case and label you the model son."

Another gay, expressive gesture from Julian.

"Why not?" he said lightly. "We're a model pair, you know."

And the next moment he was threading his way quickly across the room. A sudden movement of the crowd had shown him his mother's figure, and he had realised instinctively that she had seen him. He came up to her with a manner, about which there was something indescribably reckless, and made her a low bow of gay and abject apology.

"I beg ten thousand million pardons!" he said. "Language fails to express my feelings."

Mrs. Romaine's dress was not a success—that is to say, it was perfect in itself, and failed only as a setting for its wearer. To deprive her appearance of any possibility of "chic" or "dash" was to deprive it of all its brilliancy. But no unsuitability of colouring or cut in her gown could have been responsible for the strained, hard look which underlay her artificial smile; or for the haggard watchfulness which had lurked in her eyes until the very instant on which Julian had entered the room. The watchfulness had disappeared, but a restless intentness remained as she turned to Julian now and struck a little attitude of mock implacability, with a light, high-pitched laugh.

"Then the conversation must be carried on in dumb show," she said, "for language also fails to express my feelings, sir. What have you to say for yourself?"

Her voice, for all its gaiety, was thin and strained.

"Please, nothing," was the mock-humility answer. "I met a fellow, and he beguiled me. He was just off to America."

He was standing with his hands folded and his eyes cast down, and he did not see—he would not have understood if he had seen—the strange flash in those hard, blue eyes—such a flash as might leap up in the eyes of a woman in the silent endurance of a swift stab of pain.

"A very poor excuse," declared Mrs. Romaine gaily. "No, I don't think I shall forgive you yet. Such unscrupulous desertion must be visited as it deserves. Don't you think so?"

Lord Garstin had come up to them, and the question was addressed to him with a light laugh as she gave him her hand.

He nodded pleasantly to Julian as he answered :

"Who has deserted? Not this boy of yours, eh?"

Mrs. Romaine laughed again, and pushed Julian playfully with her fan.

"Oh, I forgot! You don't know his wickedness, of course! Take me away from him, Lord Garstin, do, and I'll confide in you. Gorgeous affair this, isn't it? I wonder what it cost?"

Lord Garstin looked round with a rather lofty smile. There were times when it pleased him to pose as an isolated representative of a bygone age by the traditions of which, in matters of taste and breeding, the present age was utterly condemned.

"Rather too gorgeous to please an old man," he said now with a fine reserve. "These dear good people would be more to my taste, do you know, if they had a little less money. Have you been outside, by-the-bye? It's really not badly done."

Mrs. Romaine turned away with him, laughing and nodding to Julian, and then she stopped and went towards her son again, touching his shoulder lightly.

"Every one isn't so stony-hearted as I am, bad boy," she whispered gaily. "Somebody has actually kept you some dances, I believe, if you apologise properly. Look, there she is."

She made a little gesture with her fan towards the entrance to the dancing-room, from which Maud Pomeroy was just emerging, looking like a picture in a white dress of the simplest Florentine form, her long hair loose on her shoulders, and crowned with a wreath of flowers. The dance music had stopped, and the music which still filled the air came from the garden. With that hard recklessness growing stronger on his face, Julian made a slight, graceful gesture towards his mother as though he would have kissed his hand to her in gratitude, turned away, and moved rapidly over to Miss Pomeroy.

More than three hours had gone by since Julian had found himself standing alone gazing stupidly in the direction in which Clemence had disappeared, and how the first two of those hours had passed he hardly knew. He had turned abruptly away and left the little street, to walk mechanically on and on, struggling blindly in a black abyss of self-contempt, in which his love lived only as additional torture.

He had emerged gradually from that abyss, or rather his sense of its surrounding blackness had faded by degrees, as all

such acute sensations must. And so completely had that blackness walled him in, and deadened all his outward perceptions, that it was only little by little, and with a dull sense of surprise, that his material surroundings dawned on him again, and he realised that he was standing looking down into the river from the Thames Embankment. His consciousness had come back to that life and world which he believed to constitute the only practical realities; but it had brought with it that which turned all its environment to bitterness and gall. His better nature had become keenly sentient. It had become a factor in his being which must throb and wince at every movement of every other component part of that being; with which parts it had, as yet, no communication on reverse lines. It must torture him, but as yet it had no power to influence him. As he stood leaning on the parapet, staring sullenly down, counting the reflection of the lamps in the dark water beneath him in the moody vacancy of reaction, the necessities of his life began to surround him once more; he saw them all as they were, sordid and base, and yet he neither saw nor attempted to see any possibility of self-extrication. The sound of Big Ben as it struck eleven had brought back to his mind the claims upon him of that particular evening.

At eleven o'clock the carriage had been ordered to take Mrs. Romaine and her party to the dance, and a grim, cynical smile touched his set, white lips as he thought of his mother. He had broken loose, temporarily, he told himself bitterly. He must take up his part again and play the farce out.

That he should throw himself into the task recklessly, with a wild oblivion of all proportion and limitation, was the inevitable result of all that had gone before; of all the perception and all the blindness with which he was racked and baffled.

Miss Pomeroy saw him coming, and turning her face away, she produced a pretty, well-turned comment on the arrangement of the rooms for the benefit of her cavalier. The next instant Julian stood beside her, his face alight with vivacity and excitement, his whole manner instinct with eager apology.

"Don't turn your back on me," he implored gaily. "No fellow ever had such hard luck as I've had to-night. Be a great deal kinder to me than I seem to deserve, and forgive me. Please!"

Miss Pomeroy turned her head and looked at him with a serene calm on her pretty face, which seemed to relegate him to a place among inferior objects entirely indifferent to her. Her voice was perhaps a little too indifferent.

"Oh, Mr. Romaine!" she said. "You've actually appeared!"

"I have," he said. "At last! There's a poor fellow I've seen a good deal of—not one of the regular set, you know, but a thoroughly unlucky chap, always in the wars. He's just off to try his luck on the other side of the world, and I met him this evening most awfully blue and lonely—he hasn't a friend in the world. Of course I had to try and cheer him up a bit, and—there, I couldn't leave him, don't you know. I packed him into the mail train at last, and bolted here as fast as wheels could bring me."

Something of the blank serenity of Miss Pomeroy's face gave way. She lifted the feather fan that hung at her girdle and began to ruffle the feathers lightly against her other hand with lowered eyelids.

"I don't think I should have troubled to hurry as it was so late!" she said, and there was a touch of reproach and resentment in her voice. Her cavalier had drifted away by this time, and in the midst of the constantly moving stream of people she and Julian were practically alone. Julian answered her quickly with eager significance.

"You would—in my place!" he said. "You would if you had had the hope of even one of the dances to which you had been looking forward—well, I won't say how, or for how long. Was it altogether a vain hope? Am I quite too late?"

"You are very late!" was the answer; but the tone was distant and indifferent no longer; and as the sound of the violins rose softly and invitingly once more from the other room a quick question from Julian received a soft affirmative in reply, and he led her triumphantly towards the music.

The room was not too full. The garden, the supper, the "show"—as the guests called it amongst themselves—as a whole prevented any overcrowding in the dancing-room; dancing being but an every-day affair. But dancing among such cunningly arranged accessories was by no means a commonplace business. The unfamiliar picturesqueness of the room, with its softly scented air, the wonderful effects of colour and light, and above all a certain wild

passion and sweetness about the music, was not wholly without effect even on the jaded, torpid receptivity of men and women of the world.

Even Miss Pomeroy's calm was apparently not wholly proof against the intoxication; by the time the music died away there was a bright colour on her cheeks, and a bright light in her eyes. On Julian's recklessness the atmosphere and the music had had much the same effect as an excessive quantity of champagne might have had. His pale face had flushed hotly, and his eyes were glittering with excitement.

He had become aware during their last turn round the room that his mother was standing in the doorway watching them, this time with Loring in attendance; and with a feverish flash of callous defiance he so guided their movements that they came to a standstill finally close before her.

"Congratulate us!" he cried gaily, "we've beaten the record! And congratulate me individually, for I've had the most awfully glorious dance of my life! Hullo, Loring, old man!"

"I'll congratulate you both," was Mrs. Romaine's ready answer, as Loring nodded. "You both look as if you had had a good time. Wonderful show, isn't it? It isn't possible to say what it must have cost. Something appalling, of course. Mad, dear, have you come across Claudia Eden? Over there, don't you see? Isn't it outrageous?"

"By Jove!" ejaculated Julian lightly, looking in the direction indicated by a slight movement of his mother's fan, as Miss Pomeroy uttered an exclamation of pretty amazement. Conspicuous against all the magnificence about her was a girl in a kind of burlesque of an Italian cotadina dress of the period, with very short skirts, very low-cut bodice, very exaggerated head-dress. She was talking and laughing with a little crowd of men; her manner was as pronounced and as unrefined as her dress; but there was about her that absolutely unconscious and impenetrable self-possession and self-assurance which stamped her as being by birth that which she was certainly not in appearance—a lady, and a very highly born lady.

"She would do anything to make a sensation," murmured Miss Pomeroy, contemplating her critically.

"But have you two seen the gardens?" went on Mrs. Romaine gaily. "No!"

Then you must simply go instantly. The most marvellous thing I ever saw! Go along at once."

With a strangely reckless and excited laugh Julian turned to Miss Pomeroy. "We must do as we are bidden, of course," he said. "Will it bore you frightfully?"

A pretty smile and the slightest possible shrug of the shoulders constituted Miss Pomeroy's answer, and they were turning away together, followed by a keen glance from Loring, when the girl in the contadina dress, passing close to them with her somewhat noisy court, intercepted their passage.

"'Evening, Maud," she said in a loud, good-natured voice, which might have been delicate and high-bred if fashion had not demanded other characteristics. "Hullo, Mr. Romaine! Like my frock, Maud?"

Miss Pomeroy murmured something gracefully inaudible, and Mrs. Romaine said, with a smile:

"Most original, Lady Claudia."

A restless gleam had come into Mrs. Romaine's eyes at the momentary pause, but there was a certain satisfaction, too, in her smile as the two girls stood face to face. Maud Pomeroy certainly never appeared to greater advantage than in contrast with a pronounced type of the modern society girl. The juxtaposition seemed to bring into strong relief everything about her appearance and demeanour which was dainty, gentle, and sweet, and to throw into shade all her more negative charm. The voice, now perfectly modulated and absolutely even, made the other girl seem "quite too vulgar," as Mrs. Romaine said to herself. She echoed Mrs. Romaine's words, and added:

"How came you to think of it?"

"I thought it would score," returned the other, with a laugh. "I can't stand these people, don't you know. I thought of getting a whole lot of us to do it; it would have been no end of a joke! Then I thought that I'd keep it to myself. Ta-ta!"

And with a rough, ungraceful gesture of farewell she passed on.

"Lady Claudia's hostess would strangle her, cheerfully, with her own hands," remarked Loring placidly.

Mrs. Romaine laughed.

"So would a great many other people," she said. "But come, you two be off and see these gardens."

Julian and Miss Pomeroy moved away

as if with one consent, and Mrs. Romaine watched them as they went with such a strange intentness in her face, that she looked for the moment as though her consciousness were actually leaving her to follow the two on whom her eyes were fixed.

The idea of the whole entertainment had originated, so people said, in the fact that its giver had spent enormous sums of money in the course of the past three years on the transformation of his grounds into an Italian garden, and the scene from the terrace, as Julian and Miss Pomeroy stepped out on to it, was indeed extraordinarily effective. There was no moon, and thousands of coloured lamps, skilfully disposed, shed a picturesque, uncertain light, under which the long ilex-shaded alleys, the box hedges, the fountains, and the statues produced an illusion which was almost perfect.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Julian in the same strained, excited voice. "Capital, isn't it? It must be almost worth while to live away here in the wilds of Fulham to have a place capable of being turned into a show like this. Don't you think so?"

Miss Pomeroy did not answer immediately. Apparently, the excitement created by their dance had rather strengthened than diminished during the interval, and she was playing almost nervously with her fan. Miss Pomeroy was not a nervous person as a rule.

"I don't know," she said vaguely. "Yes, it's very pretty, isn't it? But I don't think I should much care to have a big place, do you know. I don't think places make much difference."

Her voice was low, and very prettily modulated, and Julian threw a quick sideways glance at her. Except for a flush, and a certain look in her eyes which he could not see, her face was as demure and placid as ever.

"Don't you?" he said. "You are right, of course, and I am wrong. I can imagine circumstances under which all this would be a howling wilderness to me."

He looked at her very differently this time, with his eyes recklessly eloquent. She dropped her own eyes quickly, and said softly:

"Can you?"

They had strolled down the steps as they talked, and at their right hand a picturesque little alley, with a vista of

fountain and statue against a grove of ilex-trees, led away from the more open space in front of the house. Down this alley, secluded and apparently deserted, Miss Pomeroy turned, as if unconsciously, before she spoke again. Julian followed her lead with an ugly smile on his face.

Then she said in the same pretty, low voice :

"Tell me what circumstances?"

Julian laughed, and his laugh might well have been construed as a sign of extreme nervousness and agitation.

"I think not!" he said. "I might make you angry."

"You would not make me angry!"

They came to the end of the alley as she spoke; it opened out on a quaint little corner containing a fish-pond surrounded by a stone balustrade, the fountain in the middle sparkling and dancing in the gleam of the artificial moonlight which had been arranged here and there about the grounds to give the finishing touch to sundry "bits." Into this artificial moonlight Maud Pomeroy stepped, and stood leaning gracefully over the balustrade gazing down into the water, as she said in a voice just low and hesitating enough to be perfectly distinct :

"Mr. Romaine, will you tell me—did you think me very angry when you came to-night?"

"I hope you are not angry now, at least!" was the answer, spoken with eager anxiety. "But I would rather think you had been angry than believe that you were quite indifferent as to whether I came or not!"

"I am not—indifferent!" Maud Pomeroy paused. There was no colour at all in her cheeks now, and her lips were drawn together in a hard, thin line such as no one had ever seen on her face before. There was a dead silence. A sudden stillness had come over Julian's figure as he stood also leaning against the balustrade, but with his back to the water. His hand was clenched fiercely against the stone.

"I have no right to be angry with you," Maud Pomeroy went on; her voice was thin and hard as if its steadiness was the result of deliberate effort. "I have no rights at all. If I had——" She let her voice die away again with deliberate intention.

The silence that followed had something ghastly in it. At last, with his face as white as death, and keeping his eyes fixed steadily before him, Julian moved.

"You will catch cold, I'm afraid!" he said, a little hoarsely. "Shall we go in?"

Without a single word Miss Pomeroy moved also and retraced her steps up the alley. For one moment, and for one moment only, her face was no longer that of a gentle and amiable girl, but of a spiteful and vindictive woman.

IN LONDON: AND OUT OF IT.

PART I. OUT OF IT.

THE rural districts, we are told, are becoming depopulated. Country folks are turning their backs upon the country; they are pouring into the towns. Some people seem to be surprised that this should be so. One wonders if this is because these people, knowing something of the towns, know nothing of the country. Because the surprising thing really is, that any able-bodied and, legally, sane men and women should remain in the country—i.e. the rural districts—at all.

The country, as it exists in England in the present day, is not without its charms. It is beautiful, some of it, in fine weather. One may doubt if anything more hideous, more depressing, and more unclean than some of it, in bad weather, is to be found in London's most notorious slums. When men talk and write of the fresh air, and the sweetness, and the purity, and the simplicity, and the innocence, and the freedom of the country, I always wonder if their knowledge comes from theory or from practice. It is one thing to go for a week or for a month to the country in summer, in search of a holiday or in search of a change; it is another thing to live in the country, year in and year out, and to have its methods and its manners always with you. It is, also, one thing to live in a big country house and play the squire and the country gentleman; and it is, again, quite another thing to live in the village itself, cheek by jowl with the rural population, and face to face with their life and the possibilities it offers them. Just as one is apt to wish that some of the country magistrates who seem to be so fond of prescribing a course of prison to some of their poorer, and, therefore, more criminal neighbours, could have at least one good and sufficient taste of their own prescription, so one is apt to wish that some of these pundits, who theorise so glibly on the life of an agricultural labourer, could have some practical experience of what that life is like.

It is a commonplace to observe that, in the country, one scarcely gets any of those things for which the country is supposed to be famous. There is a season in which one is able to get country eggs, country milk, and country butter. But, for at least nine months of the year, if one is wise, one gets these things from town. Variety, as regards vegetables, at the best of times is limited. One district grows one sort, another district grows another. For a short time in summer, there is a plentiful supply of the simpler sorts—some month or six weeks after they have been displayed on the hawkers' barrows in town. But after that supply has once been disposed of, which is, as a rule, the case all too quickly, there are no vegetables—except potatoes—to be got in the country, either for love or money. If you tell some of the country folks, in villages within fifty miles of town, that fresh vegetables may be procured at moderate prices in London all the year round, they simply don't believe you. In nine villages out of ten, cultivated flowers—in the Londoner's sense—are, practically, non-existent. If you don't grow your own you will get none.

The country narrows all things—one's life, one's mental and moral horizons, one's comforts, one's conveniences, even one's choice of foods. If, residing in a village, circumstances compel you to eat only what is to be purchased in the neighbourhood, you will soon find that in the matter of food, as in everything else, monotony reigns supreme. You cannot eat what you want; you must eat what you can get. So far from being independent of your tradesmen, you will quickly discover that your tradesmen are independent of you. I once lived in a village in which an old man used to come round every day with milk. At least, he called it milk, and he charged full London prices for it; though I have seen at least as good milk sold as "skim milk" in town. My experience teaches me that in a country village it is very difficult to obtain pure milk. It was suggested to this old gentleman that if he could manage to time his visit a little earlier, it would be more convenient for the family breakfast hour. The old gentleman took umbrage. He said that if his time didn't suit our time, he wouldn't come at all. And he didn't. A visit of apology had to be paid before he would condescend to continue to supply the household. I know a village in which there is a single butcher. A

customer ventured to make some complaint about one of his joints. That butcher thereupon declared that he made it a rule never to have anything to do with people who found fault. And, at least on that occasion, he kept his word. He declined to serve the family of the offender with so much as half a pound of suet; and he persisted in declining. Visits had to be paid to, and joints had to be brought home from, a market-town some six or seven miles distant. Doubtless such a case is an extreme one, though not such an extreme one as those who havenot an intimate acquaintance with rural districts might imagine; but it certainly is a fact, that in the country, generally speaking, one has to pay superior prices for inferior articles—and be thankful, oftentimes, for getting those.

As for the fresh air and the sweetness of the country, I wonder how many villages there are in England which have any system of drainage. The sanitary arrangements in the big houses may, superficially, seem all right; but how about the smaller houses and the cottages? Not to dwell on such favourite subjects as foul and open cesspools, which, I suspect, are not the exception but the rule, how about an adequate supply of pure water? I am no chemist, nor have I any comparative analytical reports in front of me; but my own strong impression is that Londoners, whatever they may think to the contrary, are much better off in the matter of pure water than the generality of our villagers. I have some experience of country water, both in England and abroad. At present my water is pump water. It is of fair quality—for the country. One ought never to expect to get as good water in a village as one gets in a town. But, at the best of times, there are certain minute fragments floating about in it which one can but regard askance. In a hot season the pump runs dry; if we want water we have to beg, borrow, or steal. In a wet season—that is, after three or four rainy days—it gets so muddy that it has first to be filtered, and then boiled, and then we do with as little of it as we possibly can. Compared with some of our neighbours, it must be owned that we are fortunate. At a row of cottages, a little farther on, there is one pump for seven houses. It is always running dry. Quite apart from quality, its owners never get an adequate supply. There are constant wrangles. They regard

each other's proceedings with the pump-handle with ever watchful eyes. Most of the country round about gets its water-supply from open wells. In theory—and in poetry—the water in an open well is cool, clear, and sweet. In practice, I know that I would not drink the water out of an average well—at least, if there was any other water to be had. The average well is seldom thoroughly cleansed, and the water it contains must be reeking with impurities.

It would, of course, be absurd to suppose that nothing can be said in favour of the country as country. There are the poets, and a great cloud of similar witnesses upon the other side. And the world has observed that that skilled dialectician, Mr. St. George Mivart, has, recently even, found something to say in favour of hell—as hell. Dr. Johnson declared that the finest thing to be seen in Scotland was the high-road to England. Doubtless, if one feels that one can get out of the country whenever one pleases, and, as was the case with the phantom besiegers in Longfellow's poem, can, at one's own sweet will, fold one's tent like the Arabs and silently vanish away, one may find in the country abundant themes for the, perhaps, a trifle hackneyed, rhapsodies. But when a man is not only rooted, but chained, to the country, and has to spend in it all the days of all the years of his life, I, for my part, find myself unable to suggest many rhapsodical themes to him. You may certainly take it for granted that it is not the romantic beauty of the country which appeals to him. It is something of quite a different kind.

In a village with which I am acquainted—it is, in many respects, blessed above most other villages—there are, broadly speaking, three methods by means of which a youngster may decide to earn his daily bread; and if he desires to earn it by any other means he must go elsewhere. There is, first of all, employment at the local railway station. Although the village is only an insignificant one, the station is a somewhat important junction on the railway. It is only the more fortunate ones who get that. They have a chance not only of rising in life, but also of getting out into the great wide world beyond. I take it that every youngster worth his salt is anxious to do that. Failing the railway, there is employment to be obtained upon the neighbouring large estates, particularly as gamekeepers. The work

is thankless work. It is not well paid, though the birds, by the time that they are killed, sometimes cost somewhere in the neighbourhood of a guinea a head. It only employs a limited number of persons, and those not all the year round.

The staple industry of the neighbourhood is the third and last method by means of which, in these parts, a man may endeavour to earn his daily bread—agricultural labour. I suppose that, if you were to draw a five-mile circle, some seventy or eighty per cent. of the able-bodied male inhabitants would be found to be agricultural labourers. It is difficult for us, who are not agricultural labourers, to realise what the life of an agricultural labourer really means. It is difficult for us, even in imagination, to put ourselves in the place of such a one. Let the wise men say what they please to the contrary, in an English village it would seem that the man who becomes an agricultural labourer passes through the portal over which is inscribed the legend: "Abandon hope all ye who enter here." For the agricultural labourer there is no hope in this world. He may rank above the beasts of the field, but only just above them. Intellectually and socially he is not perceptibly better off than they are. If he is fortunate, so long as he works all day and every day, he may just be able to keep himself alive. Directly he is unable to work he comes upon the parish. The agricultural labourer's old age is crowned with the pauper's uniform. His path leads through the workhouse to the grave. His children see this more clearly than their fathers did. Is it strange that they should be seeking to escape their parents' evil fate by fleeing to the towns?

An agricultural labourer who is married and has a family never buys meat. He never tastes it unless it is given to him as a dole. He never takes a holiday. When a holiday is forced upon him it means short commons—that is, nothing to eat. The only prospect he has in life is not alone the prospect, but the certainty of getting poorer. Poorer and poorer, with the "house" in the end. If he is lucky, and the parson, and the squire, and such-like look after the parish, he will be a recipient of charity from the cradle to the grave. He will never have anything in the shape of rational amusement, neither he nor his. Were anything of that sort to come his way, he might gape, and stare, and laugh—if you can call the hooting

sound he makes laughter. But not only would he not enjoy himself; he would not understand what was meant. He is imbruted—a mere animal. That is what "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain," in the present year of grace, has made of him. His only enjoyments are material—beer and baccy. The wise folk, who speak of improving his condition, seem disposed to begin by depriving him of those.

To talk to such an individual as this of politics is to indulge in the wildest irony. For instance, the Primrose League is abroad in the land. Smoking concerts are given, to which the agricultural labourer is especially invited, free. He is supposed to come to listen to "comic" songs judiciously mingled with political dissertations. I am no politician—Heaven forefend!—but, as the man says in the play, "it does seem to me so funny." Not long ago a "Home Rule Van" came into the neighbourhood. That was almost funnier than the Primrose League. Clever gentlemen evinced the most lively anxiety to preach what they called "Home Rule" to men who had to pay rent and bring up a family of six or seven children on twelve shillings a week.

In England, at any rate, the case of the agricultural labourer seems hopeless. What can be done for him? His employers, the farmers, are, practically, many of them, in almost as evil a plight as he is. What prospects have they? In a strictly commercial sense, few can afford to pay him the wages they are paying him now. In the district of which I am writing, a great deal of the farming is done by amateurs, rich men who farm for the fun of it. They can afford to pay for their whistle, and they do, through the nose. Their farming is done at a very heavy loss. If they were to pay more than the market rate of wages, it would come hard upon the professional farmers. And to speak to the farmers who farm for a living of paying higher wages than they do at present, one might as well speak to them of flying.

If you want the man to be above the animal, you will have to raise him above the animal, or, at any rate, give him a chance to raise himself. Destine the man to toil for his bare daily bread his whole life, and let him know that he is predestined, and what chance have you given him? He dare not cease from toil, because, like the beast of burden, who idles for a moment, he gets the whip, he starves;

or, what is the same thing, although some of the wise profess to think otherwise, he comes upon the parish. If a man is always toiling, and yet never earns more in a day than just sufficient to sustain life for that day, by degrees only the animal side of the man continues to live. The rest of the man is dead. It is a question of the survival of the fittest, the fittest, that is, for the life he leads. It may read like a hard saying, but it is a true saying, that an appreciable proportion of our rural population are animals, mere animals, just above the level of the brutes, perhaps, but only just. I do not know who is to blame for it. I do not for a moment believe that they are themselves to blame. To paraphrase the philosopher, Were it not for the mercy of Almighty God I might be as they are.

As might be expected, not seldom, they do not realise their own condition. They are incapable. One does not realise one's own ignorance till one has begun to learn. Their children, their sons and daughters, have begun to learn. They are beginning to understand that their fathers—not to speak of their mothers!—have known whips. They are beginning to realise that they, in their turns, if they are not careful, may have those whips exchanged for scorpions.

Change is the salt of life. Variety is not only charming, it is essential to health. We, who make some pretensions to education, know that this is true enough as applied to ourselves. We know that we become so weary of a place, a person, or a thing, that only change can restore our mental balance. Our own experience, that wisest of physicians, tells us that the more variety we can introduce into our daily occupations the better it will be for us. Above all, we are aware that after a certain amount of labour we need a certain amount of relaxation. We know that only to work, eat, and sleep year in and year out means, after a certain length of time, atrophy—paralysis of at least some of those functions which go to make the healthy man.

Knowing all this, and bearing it well in mind, let us consider the monotony which dogs the life of the village labourer. Let us, if we can, put ourselves in his place and endeavour to realise what we should suffer. It is no use saying that it is all a question of habit, and that, therefore, he does not suffer what we should suffer. Probably not. The old-time

agricultural labourer has become so thoroughly imbruted that, so long as he gets his beer and baccy, he feels nothing. But with his children the case is different. We are bringing them up to be more or less colourable imitations of ourselves. We are teaching them, as we are teaching our own children, that the world is a wide world. We are, in short, doing our best to awake in them that dormant sense, that miraculous something, which differentiates the man from the animal. We are opening their eyes that they may see. What is it, in their own village, that they do see?

In the answer to that question, practically, lies the kernel of the whole matter. It gives, in one word, the reason why the young blood, the new bone and sinew, of our rural districts, is hurrying into the towns. The answer to the question is, that in their own village they see nothing. Village life is still life—dead life—stagnant. It is the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. In a finite sense it will be the same unto all eternity. In a village one works, and eats, and sleeps—and, on those rare occasions when one gets a chance, one drinks. When you add to this, that village life is apt to mean starvation wages and the workhouse in the end, is it strange that the new generation—in a very wide sense, it is indeed a new one—is beginning to evince a desire for an enlarged horizon? My own experience causes me to doubt if there is, in any of our villages, a healthy young man or woman who is not anxious, above and before all things, "to get away," and, if you were in the place of such a one, would you like the Little Pedlington horizon to be before you, unceasingly, unintermittingly, your whole life long? Might you not as well be stuck in a hole and constrained to spend your life in it?

Why we like the country is because it is a change from the town. Wise men may shake their heads, and deplore what they are commencing to call the rural exodus, but until they can persuade the townsfolk who visit the country for a change to stay there, they will not succeed in dissuading the new generation of countryfolk from going for a change to town. And the man who once becomes fond of change, as an agricultural labourer is dead and done for.

One has the fear of the wise man before one's eyes, or one would be tempted to exclaim, "And a good thing too!" Agriculture is in a bad way. And especially is it in

a bad way when it compels its humbler votaries to lead the lives which they do lead—the lives of beasts of burden. It is nonsense to suggest that our young rustics may go farther and fare worse. It is a delusion—born of ignorance. It is doubtful if the inmates of our prisons are not better off than our agricultural labourers. They live easier lives, they are better housed, they do less work, they are, at least, as well fed, there is infinitely more variety in their existence. An agricultural labourer is a skilled man—hedging and ditching, ploughing, stacking, sowing, reaping, the management of cattle and of horses, are not things which can be learnt in a day. Yet there is no unskilled labourer at any other trade but agriculture whose earnings and whose position cannot favourably compare with his. What a stir there was some time ago about the status of casual labour at the docks! The casual docker is apt to be, not only of necessity, but of his own choice, a black sheep. Yet his position favourably compares with that of the agricultural labourer. He, at any rate, has known something of the "Sturm und Drang." He has tasted the wine of life—though the wine may not have been of first-rate quality. He has been, he still may be, something besides a beast of burden.

I, for my part, am conscious of strong sympathy for the man who is anxious to make the most of the life that is his. I am anxious to make the most of the life that is mine, and why should he not be the same? Were such a one, the State-educated son of an agricultural labourer, to come to me and to ask me if I would advise him to spend the whole of his life in his native village, or to go and try his luck in town, I should say, if I said anything, "Go to town." I am constitutionally unwilling to assume the responsibility of advising anybody about anything. I am strenuously of opinion that in the ordering of his own life each man should be his own adviser. But I should not hesitate on such an occasion to plump for town. For I know of my own knowledge that a man vegetates in the country; one only lives in a town. The larger the town the larger the life. It used a century or two back to be a subject for complaint in England that London had grown so big. Great disasters were foreseen to be in store because it would continue to grow and to grow. Similar prophecies are in the air to-day. We are told that dreadful things will happen because London will

persist in draining the rural districts of their population.

Well, those who live longest, perhaps, will see.

THE BARD'S SPELL.

THE Prince lay dead in the old grey hall,
That towered on Snowdon's side;
Prayer, and science, and skill had failed;
The people tore their hair and wailed.
The stern old King sate mute and grim,
The pale Queen shrank from the funeral hymn,
And by the dead boy, whose fair young face
Showed proud and sweet in Death's awful grace,
Wild wept his plighted bride.

A grey bard strode to the castle gate,
His harp from his shoulder swung.
"Show me the chamber of death," he said,
"Leave me alone with the noble dead;
Our princes to-day learn another lore
From that their fathers believed of yore;
In the name of the wisdom Merlin taught,
I bid ye let pass the aid unsought,"
And power was in his tongue.

He raised the fair girl from her knees,
He bade her seek her bower;
The heavy doors he bolted close,
And then through the great, sad, silent house
The sound of the harp rang wild and shrill—
Now sinking low to a wail of ill,
Now pealing out 'neath its master's hand,
In tones to summon or to command,
In notes as of kingly power.

At last the music changed and sank
To a sweet, weird, mystic strain,
It thrilled like love, and it yearned like prayer,
It swelled like praise through the pausing air;
And the stately parents of the dead,
The girl with her passionate tear-rain shed,
The grey old nurses and servitors all,
Heard, joining the strains that rang through the hall,
The dead man's voice again!

And from the solemn room of death,
With his great blue eyes ablaze,
The bard strode out with his harp borne high
They held their breath as he swept them by,
And dazed and white, with the life new lit
In the strong young frame so fain for it,
The boy, called back, came forth to his own,
To love and honour, to bride and throne.
Such was music in olden days!

THE BREADTOWN VIXEN.

A COMPLETE STORY.

I.

THEY were a bad lot in Breadtown, of Nevada State, and Patsy Cane was reckoned as bad as any mortal in Breadtown. She was only eighteen, but iniquity is not measured by birth certificates. Her father, Morley Cane, who kept the saloon, was simply vile. Patsy was his child. Morley Cane set the fashion in heaping odium upon his daughter. His hate of the girl was a fearful and wonderful piece of inhumanity. There was nothing criminal with which he forbore to charge her. Every one believed him, from the most

susceptible of bachelor gold-diggers to Patsy herself. Upon the whole, therefore, the girl seemed to have found her niche as bar-tender in her father's saloon. It was—from her father's testimony—impossible to shock this maiden's ears. Consequently the talk in Cane's saloon when Patsy was serving out drinks was fully as unrighteous as if Morley Cane himself had been at the bar, and nothing feminine was within a hundred yards of the house.

Externally, Patsy seemed to justify Breadtown in rating her very, very meanly. She was gaunt, cross-eyed, with flame-coloured hair, which she usually wore unkempt down her back, and was cursed with a retroussé nose which would have been coquettish in another girl, but which, in combination with Patsy's long, thin-lipped mouth and abrupt chin, seemed to put the last touch of ignominy and ugliness upon the girl. Only in her hands and feet had Patsy aught of physical comeliness. These, however, were small and shapely. With her hands she was wont to serve out drinks at fifty cents, and indiscriminate smacks; and her feet seemed quite as available for stamps of high-toned indignation and kicks as for the ordinary purposes of locomotion.

Patsy's tongue was in fit keeping with the rest of her, her environment, and the nature which had come to her as a paternal heritage. It is impossible to say anything about the qualities she owed to her mother. No one ever allowed that the girl had had a mother. She certainly did not look as if a mother's care and kisses had ever been her portion in any degree. When Morley Cane came nearest to thinking about Patsy's other parent, he had acute fits of temper which might be held to prove that the girl would have profited but little had she continued to possess two parents instead of one.

She was, according to common Breadtown opinion, the most forward young shrew and virago that the world had ever seen. As lief would she pull a man's nose—and that not in mere kittenish jest, but in earnest, which no gentleman can endure—and heap foul adjectives upon his head, as look at him. Hardly could she slide a cocktail across the counter to a customer without poisoning the drink with some distasteful remark or humiliating observation which, as often as not, if the purchaser had a conceit of himself, put her in peril of receiving the mixture in her face without any "by your leave."

In short; this girl was tolerated by Breadtown only because there seemed no help for it. There was not a great deal of civilisation in the place, but there was just enough of the spirit of it to restrain the miners and citizens from calling a town's meeting on the question of extinguishing the young woman in the least painful but the most effectual manner conceivable.

II.

SUCH was Patsy and such was Breadtown, when one afternoon the ramshackle car which brought in the mails every other day, laboriously climbed the stony water-course which was Breadtown's only road into the outer world, and dropped a passenger.

As it happened, Patsy was crossing the highway at that moment. To her, therefore, the driver shouted. She came with wrath seething upon her tongue, and doubtful only in what way to find the most fiery and nauseous exit. But the driver meanwhile had bounded from the car, and left his steaming steed to itself.

"Tell her what you want, and she'll take you along," the man had said to the stranger ere going his way.

Patsy approached, with her arms akimbo—her bony red elbows were not a pretty sight—and scrutinised this new-comer. Strangers were not often seen in Breadtown, and seldom wanted. Breadtown was, in fact, particularly anxious to keep itself to itself until the source of the dribblets of gold which it found and lived upon had been discovered for the good of the original inhabitants. That was why chance arrivals in the place never stayed long. They were taught to understand that their room was far dearer to Breadtown than their society—unless, of course, they brought with them plenty of dollars, considerable generosity, and a measure of practical knowledge, either of metallurgy or engineering.

Patsy was about to relieve her surcharged mind when this stranger, hearing her step, stretched out his hand.

"I am blind," he said. "Will you kindly guide me to Mr. Cane's saloon? I am told I can have a bed there."

"Blind!"

The girl had seen much in Breadtown that excited her anger, but this was the first time her chord of pity had been touched.

"However came you to be blind, mister?" she enquired. "And to ha' come to Breadtown, of all places!"

"It is a long story, my girl. Perhaps I'll tell it you by-and-by. But I am tired with the jolting of that car. It must have been worth seeing, the road; but I've done with seeing things."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Patsy, like one overwhelmed. "And you can't be over'n above forty!"

"I am about that, my girl, and hungry too," the stranger replied, with a smile unlike the smiles of Breadtown, which were mostly leers. "Will this Mr. Cane take me in for a day or two, do you think?"

"My sakes! and you blind! Tell you what, mister"—with quite a pathetic lowering of her voice—"if he don't you shall have my bed, an' welcome. They might take me in elsewheres, more like they mightn't; but I ain't been these years in Breadtown without finding out caves an' places."

"What fly've you got along there!" called out a woman from one of the shanties by the street-way.

The girl had much ado to suppress the retort discourteous that rose to her lips. She did it, however, and felt glad of it. But she gave the woman a look that sent her indoors with a sense of discomfort. Then she turned to the blind man.

"Come, mister," she said, with a touch of real gentleness, "take my hand, an' I guess I'll bring you there. I'm Patsy Cane. If I was any other gell, I might persuade my father to fix you up. As it is, I guess you'd better be after making your own bargain. There never was a gell so hated as me—an' yet I ain't blind."

The next instant a new sensation possessed poor Patsy. The blind stranger with the kindly manner and the alluring face—his blindness carried with it no disfigurement—had squeezed the hand she had given him. It was the soft, appealing pressure of gratitude, and it went straight to Patsy's indurated young heart.

She turned and looked at him with a puzzled but becoming light in her eyes. The soul can peep in its own beauteous way even from greenish eyes that fail to see straight before them. So it was with Patsy.

"You are very good," said the blind man.

"That," replied Patsy, with piteous positiveness, "is just the one thing I ain't, and never shall be."

By this they were at the saloon. It

was too early for it to be crowded. Most of the "boys" were out among the rocks, seeking the gold which was to give them golden lives.

"Go straight along in," whispered Patsy, as she pushed the swing-door, "an' I'll sneak round at the back an' jine the boss among the bottles."

The "boss" was among the bottles, which he had been tasting impartially for the last hour or two. The consequence was that he had reached the mellow stage of intoxication. It was a condition in which he was not wholly averse to conversation which did not drift unmistakeably in the direction of his own self-interest.

To be sure, he was surprised—and he said so in his own ill-sounding, emphatic way—to be confronted by a blind man asking for quarters. But when it appeared the blind man had dollars in his pocket—though not many—the matter was soon "fixed up."

"You've to pay me five dollars every twenty-four hours for your kip and your bed; that's understood, mister, ain't it?" asked Morley Cane.

"Five dollars! It's a great deal."

"Say three, father," whispered a voice at Boss Cane's elbow.

"You've to pay me five dollars," Morley Cane repeated with adamant decision, "and then you can have a bed—and for you, you slut, you've to find your night under the wood here, for it's your room he'll have, and——"

"I don't mind that," Patsy observed.

"Aud you'll hev to look arter him, with vittals and that—so you know, you——"

The stranger writhed at the language that followed.

Eventually, however, the matter was arranged. The stranger was "fixed up." Patsy was to do the work which was to put five more dollars daily into her father's pocket, and as a beginning she had to lead him upstairs.

"I'm more sorry than I can say," the blind man murmured as he leaned on the girl's arm.

"That! Oh, that's nothing," whispered Patsy. "You should hear him of evenings. Anyhow, I'm real glad he didn't turn rusty and say 'no.' There ain't a man in Breadtown as I'd give up my bed for without a fuss, but I kinder like doing it for you, mister."

One more squeeze of Patsy's small hand, and their compact of friendship was sealed.

III.

IN a week this blind stranger, whose name was Williams, fell ill, and seemed likely to stay ill some little time. That would not have mattered so much if his stock of dollars had continued to hold out. But he had only a couple of hundred greenbacks in the world, which, at thirty-five a week, could not last long. Thus in the fifth week of his sojourn in the mining town he found himself in a sorry plight.

"Patsy," he said one evening this week, "what shall I do? I cannot work, to beg I am ashamed, and I have no relatives I care to apply to."

The girl said nothing very satisfactory at the moment, but a little later she stuffed a packet of notes into his hands.

"You might just as well have 'em as me," she observed. "I'm too good at bar-tending ever to run short of a place. There's a hundred and fifty of 'em. By time they're through, maybe you'll be in a better town than this."

"You are not serious, Patsy?"

"Feel 'em; smell 'em—they're good 'uns, I take my oath," said Patsy.

The blind man rested his head between his hands while his sightless eyes fastened—or seemed to fasten—upon the girl's face.

"Will you," he said, when the pause had become rather embarrassing, "put your little hand in mine?"

The girl complied with a grin that was not wholly profane.

"Whoever obtains this little hand will get a blessing from Heaven that he must indeed be a good man to deserve," said the blind man, stroking and fondling the hand.

"'Tain't commonly thought so in Breadtown," Patsy ventured to demur.

"Perhaps not. I don't know what you are like in the flesh. Are your eyes blue, grey, or a sweet sympathetic brown? It doesn't matter. I don't care either what colour your hair is—it is soft enough, whatever colour it is. To me, Patsy, you are among the loveliest of your sex. I look at you, not through my eyes, but with the inner vision of the heart, which makes few mistakes."

"Mr. Williams," said Patsy, "you'd set a poor gell beside herself with humps with talk o' that kind. Say you'll take them notes, an' I'll take my hook downstairs to them cocktail-swilling pigs."

"No," replied the blind man, "I am not

bad enough for that. I should lose all my self-respect. Surely your father will give me a little grace?"

"Mr. Williams," pleaded Patsy, "if you don't pay up squarely each day he'll turn you out. There's talk about it as it is. They are such durned fools in this place."

"What do you mean? Why should they turn me out if I can pay my way?"

"I'll tell you straight. It's the best thing to do. Ever since you've come, the boys say the find of gold's got less an' less, an' I heard Mike Grady a-whispering last night as they wouldn't stand it much longer. The durned fools think it's because you've come—they're that soft. 'I guess,' one of 'em said after Mike Grady'd spoke, 'we'll hev to get rid of him if he don't cut his sticks soon.' That's gospel out of his own mouth, an' you can believe when they've thoughts like them in 'em, the doings don't stand a long way behind. Now, say you'll take them dollars. I'll be real proud of it, Mr. Williams."

"No, Patsy, I can't. I'm in Heaven's hands. I'll take my chance."

"Well, guess you know your own business best, Mr. Williams. You ain't got any friends here, which is main bad, I tell you; leastways, you've only got Patsy Cane, who ain't much."

"Patsy!"

"Yes, Mr. Williams."

"Will you kiss me?"

The girl laughed and kissed the blind man, and then went downstairs with a fair colour in her cheeks, unusual brightness in her eyes, and a mysterious elation of heart.

IV.

It was as Patsy Cane had said. The Breadtown boys were a set of superstitious, fanciful brutes for the most part, degraded below the beasts by their concentrated lust for gold, gold, nothing but gold.

No sooner was it known that the blind man, who had come to them for no specific purpose, but simply because he had been deluded thither by the mailman for the sake of his car fare, was cleaned out, than the miners resolved that he should go, willy nilly. The plea that he was sick was not worth entertaining. He had brought them bad luck. They had already a stout score against him. It should not be increased by the losses of another four-and-twenty hours.

This was the decision they came to in

the bar-room three days after Patsy's ineffectual effort to make Mr. Williams accept her dollars.

Morley Cane was as forward as the others in the matter. There was something in the personality of his guest that humbled him, and he was not a man to be humiliated with impunity.

"He takes his hook to-morrow," said Boss Cane.

"Whether or no?" suggested one of the boys.

"Why, certainly, whether or no. There ain't no City Marshal in Breadtown, as I know. Us can do as we please."

A chorus of full-flavoured oaths and phrases confirmatory of this agreeable statement followed.

Patsy, who was dispensing drinks, listened in silence, but with growing care of the inhabitants of Breadtown.

"It'll break our little Wenner's heart here," sneered a man who had just asked her for some rum.

The man got the rum—in the eye.

After which there was a shindy. This ended in Morley Cane taking his daughter by the shoulders, and in the presence of the élite of Breadtown's reprobates kicking Patsy out of the room.

"Miss Cock-eye can go and keep company with Mr. Blind-eye!" shouted this amiable parent.

The girl stayed outside for several minutes with clenched fists, biting her lip and breathing furiously. Then she acted upon Boss Cane's suggestion.

When she left Mr. Williams it was with the curious words upon her tongue:

"I'd as lief die with you as live with any one else."

V.

AND that, strange to say, was her portion.

The following afternoon a determined attempt to expel the blind man from the saloon was entirely foiled by Patsy. The girl's tactics were not in themselves very heroic, but they served her turn—for the time. She had an armoury of plates and other crocks, and also a fair supply of hot water, and both hot water and plates were crashed upon the heads of the men who had proposed to ascend the steep, narrow stairs which approached Mr. Williams's room.

Of course this could not last.

Morley Cane, in a passion the like of which even Breadtown seldom saw, swore

that they should both be turned adrift into the world together; and that if they again resisted, six-shooters should be requisitioned.

Patsy heard this menace without flinching.

"Mr. Williams, can you move out?" she asked.

"Heaven knows I cannot," was the reply.

"Well, then, I'll kip on holding the fort," Patsy rejoined, with well-feigned levity.

She dissembled the danger of their position. Something of her father's desperation was in her veins.

But the fort was this time stormed, and carried, though not without difficulty. Boss Cane was among the first on the stairhead.

"You devil's kid!" he cried; "take that!"

The girl reeled, and fell, with a laugh.

"Now for the other one!" shouted Morley Cane. "They'll be a pair down below."

The man was half mad. Else he could not have butchered first his own daughter, and then an inoffensive stranger.

The deed done, a certain soberness came upon the miners. It kept to them until they had buried the two bodies in one grave. Then it departed in a carouse the like of which Breadtown had seldom seen.

CONCERNING TRUMPETS.

THE trumpet, as everybody knows, is a musical instrument of great antiquity, which has usually been held in high honour by the sons of men. According to Berlioz the quality of its tone is "noble and brilliant"; it comports with warlike ideas; with cries of fury and vengeance, with loud triumphal songs; it lends itself, he says, to the expression of grand, lofty, and energetic sentiments, and to "the majority of tragic accents." For these reasons, perhaps, it is not a success in the hands of an amateur, who seems to find a considerable difficulty in getting out of it the "noble and brilliant note," and the "tragic accents," described by the composer of "Lélio." In most ages and countries skilled performers have been regarded as an appanage of Royalty, and dignified with more or less bravery of dress. I suppose

that in Her Majesty's army nobody displays a more resplendent uniform than the trumpeters, except it be the drum-majors! So far as can be gathered from ancient records the trumpeter has always enjoyed this and other distinctions. No public ceremony seems to have been complete without his presence. In peace or war he was equally master of the situation. When the first trumpet—it was probably a ram's horn—was blown, and where, and by whom, I am unable, however, to ascertain, but on the Egyptian monuments the trumpeter is conspicuous in pageant, procession, and battle. A blare of trumpets celebrated the completion of a Pyramid, the erection of a Sphinx, or the return of a Rameses loaded with the spoils of victory. The silver strains floated far and free down the waters of the Nile. Among the Hebrews, the trumpet, whether Keron, the crooked, or Shophar, the straight, was employed on an infinite variety of occasions; but the silver trumpets with which Moses was commanded to supply the host of the Israelites were reserved for special purposes, such as the calling together of the people, the journeying of the camps, sounding the alarm of battle, and announcing the sacrifices on feast days or new moons. We all have read how at the bidding of the Hebrew trumpets the walls of Jericho fell to the ground; and their rolling echoes reverberate throughout the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament. The anniversary of the world's birthday, one of the most important of the Jewish festivals, was called the Feast of Trumpets, because trumpet-blowing was its principal occupation. Both the straight and the crooked trumpets were blown in the Temple that day; while in the highways and byways every person—even a child—was free to entertain himself and his friends, by making sweet music, like Mrs. Browning's "great god Pan"—"down in the reeds by the river."

The Greeks made abundant use of the trumpet; it rings out loud and clear in the Homeric poems. As for the "tuba" of the Romans, it peals through all their history from the days of old, when Lars Porsena of Clusium swore by "the nine gods" that the great House of Tarquin should suffer wrong no more, and sent forth his messengers, north and south, and east and west, until every "tower, and town, and cottage" had heard "the trumpet's blast," down to those gorgeous times when a Tiberius or a Domitian rolled

in his imperial chariot along the Via Appia, with lictors and guards in front of him, and his trumpeters filling the air with frequent strains of triumph. With a flourish of trumpets Nero took his seat to preside over the gladiatorial shows of the Amphitheatre. Those Roman trumpets carried their "tragic accents" from the Carpathians to the Pyrenees, from the Nile to the Thames. They were heard amidst the ruins of Carthage; they resounded beneath the lofty masses of the Pyramids. At length their strains were silenced by the louder blasts which Goth and Hun, streaming across the mountains, blew to the shame and dismay of degenerate Rome in the agony of its dying days.

The ringing sounds of trumpet or horn enliven the old mediæval romances of Charlemagne and his paladins. The reader who knows his "Marmion" will remember how the poet, when describing the lost battle of Flodden, sighs for "a blast of that dread horn on Fontarabian echoes borne." That "dread horn" was the famous horn of Roland, which, when he was sore pressed by the Saracens in the mountain-pass of Roncesvalles, he blew with a mighty breath to make known to Charlemagne his grievous strait. At the third blast it cracked in twain, and all the birds in the valley fell dead, and a great panic seized upon the turbaned host of the Paynim. Charlemagne caught its echoes at St. Jean Pied de Port, some leagues distant; but before he could carry his men-at-arms to the rescue, Roland and Oliver and their comrades had fallen beneath the rush of their myriad foes. The trumpet was, in fact, the chosen instrument of Chivalry as of Royalty. The Knight could no more dispense with its silver music than the King. It heralded the furious charges on the plains of Palestine; it announced the beginning of the feast in the "baronial halls." As for Kings, they stirred not a foot without it. When Philip of France—in "King John"—would make terms with his citizens of Angiers, he cries:

Some trumpet summon hither to the walls
These men of Angiers;

and on their coming into his presence he informs them—quite unnecessarily:

Our trumpet called you to this gentle parle.

It was to the sound of trumpets that William the Norman mustered his army on the heights of Hastings. It was to the sound of trumpets that Edward the Third

led his men across the Somme on their way to Cressy. It was to the sound of trumpets that Henry the Fifth entered the echoing streets of London on his return from victorious Agincourt. Moreover, in joust and tourney the trumpet played a conspicuous part. Thus, in "Lear," the combat between Edmund, the false, and Edgar, the real Earl of Gloucester, is preceded by three trumpet-calls: "If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet." And the trumpet sounds once—twice—thrice; then Edgar enters, armed, with a trumpet before him. In "Ivanhoe," at the great passage of arms at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, the Grand Master of the Templars assumes his seat; and when the chivalry of his order is placed around and behind him, each in his due rank, a loud and long flourish of the trumpets makes known that the Court are seated for judgment. When the Templars ride away from the lists, in a dark line of spears, from which the white mantles of the knights shine against the dusky garments of their retainers, "like the lighter-coloured edges of a sable cloud," their trumpets sound "a wild march of an Oriental character, which formed the usual signal for the Templars to advance."

We need hardly remind the reader of the trumpet-strains that stir the blood in the pages of Froissart. There is a good deal of it in all the old chroniclers and dramatists. The trumpet seems to have maintained its pre-eminence in England during the Tudor reigns. There was that in its proud music which doubtlessly suited the temper of "bluff King Hal" and "the lion-hearted Elizabeth." Afterwards it found, for military purposes, powerful rivals in the bugle, the "whistling fife," and the rattling drum; but one hears of it on many a battle-field in the Low Countries during the wars of France, Germany, Spain, and Holland.

However, on grand public occasions, and in the pomp and circumstance of Royalty, the trumpet still holds its own, and within the last century it has found its way into the orchestra; as in Glück's "Iphigenia in Tauride," Weber's "Der Freischütz," Beethoven's "Symphony in A," and Wagner's "Lohengrin."

The dignity of the trumpet is proved by its association with certain famous personifications. Thus, one never sees

Fame, Honour, or Victory, without a trumpet. For that matter, a great many mortals are never seen without an accompaniment of the same kind, which they blow with might and main in order to catch the attention of their fellows. The trumpet, in this sense, is almost indispensable; the bigger your trumpet, the louder your fanfare, the greater will be your success. Politicians, priests, authors, actors, professors, agitators, philanthropists, all blowing their loudest in order to blow themselves into popularity, or place, or pelf, or power! There are men and women with wares to sell—their consciences, their pens, their talents—who, by persistent trumpeting, get them disposed of at their own price. The wares may be sadly damaged, but the loud advertisement confuses and overcomes the buyer. Other vendors, with better stuff to sell, get never a bid because they cannot handle their trumpets, or are too scrupulous to make use of them. Sometimes, it is true, the staple is of such excellent quality that the people crowd round to buy it even without "a flourish of trumpets."

IMAGINARY TRAVELS.

THERE are two classes of books which treat of imaginary travels, and of countries not to be found on the surface of the globe. The one describes the politics, the constitutions, the laws, manners, and customs of ideal states, with a purpose which is almost exclusively didactic, and includes such works as More's "Utopia," Campanella's "City of the Sun," Harrington's "Oceana," and similar books; while the other narrates travels of an imaginary and impossible kind, with a purpose which is generally satirical, and in this class the most pre-eminent example is Swift's immortal "Gulliver." Although the most noteworthy, it was not the first work of the kind. There were strong men before Agamemnon, and many tales of imaginary travel before Lemuel Gulliver astonished the world.

Among the earliest known works of this kind are two by a Gascon, Cyrano de Bergerac, who was born early in the seventeenth century, and who, after a short career as a soldier, turned his attention to literature, and produced two satirical books of imaginary travel under the titles of "Histoire Comique des États et Empires de la Lune," and "Histoire Comique des

États et Empires du Soleil." They became very popular both in France, where numerous editions have appeared, and in England, where a translation was published so early as 1659. One noticeable feature of these books is the way in which the writer runs counter to popular prejudices, and exalts what it was customary to decry. An instance of this may be found even in so small a matter as his attitude towards the unfortunate possessors of red hair. The prejudice against hair of this colour—Judas-haired was a frequent adjective of old, and Rosalind says of Orlando, "His very hair is of the dissembling colour"—is very ancient and general. There is an old French rhyme, which was in common use in the days of Cyrano de Bergerac, which says:

Homme roux et femme barbue
De trente pas loin le salue,
Avecques trois pierres au poing
Pour t'en aider à ton besoign.

This recommendation to salute a red-haired man or bearded woman at a distance of thirty feet, with three stones held in reserve in the fist, does not betoken a friendly feeling towards unlucky Rufuses; but Cyrano says boldly: "A brave head covered with red hair is nothing else but the sun in the midst of his rays, yet many speak ill of it, because few have the honour to be so;" and again, after saying that flaxen hair is a sign of fickleness and black of obstinacy, but the medium is between the two, he continues: "Where wisdom in favour of red-haired men hath lodged virtue, so their flesh is much more delicate, their blood more pure, their spirits more clarified, and consequently their intellect more accomplished, because of the mixture of the four qualities." Wherein is great comfort for those afflicted with fiery polls.

The moon was a favourite locality with seventeenth century writers of imaginary travels. Almost contemporaneously with Cyrano de Bergerac's books, two English journeys to the moon were published, both in 1638. The first was entitled "The Strange Voyage and Adventures of Domingo Gonzales to the World in the Moon," and was long supposed to be written by the Spaniard whose name it bore. But although not published till 1638, it was really written many years earlier, about the year 1600, by one Francis Godwin, who afterwards became in succession Bishop of Llandaff and of Hereford. The book is ingeniously written, and contains many interesting and acute speculations.

Hallam has pointed out that the writer declares positively for the Copernican system, which was uncommon at that time, and that he also had a fairly clear comprehension of the principle of gravitation, it being distinctly supposed that the earth's attraction diminishes with the distance. The mode by which Gonzales reached the moon was somewhat complicated, but his return was managed with great simplicity. The globe of the moon, he explains, possesses a certain amount of attractive power, but far less than that of the earth; so that, he continues, "if a man do but spring upwards with all his force, as dancers do when they show their activity by capering, he shall be able to mount fifty or sixty feet high, and then he is quite beyond all attraction of the moon." It is very simple; Gonzales springs accordingly, leaves the moon behind him, and reaches the earth without misadventure.

The second journey to the lunar sphere, published in 1638, was Bishop Wilkins's well-known work, the title of which explains its subject: "A Discovery of a New World; or, a discourse tending to prove that 'tis probable there may be another habitable world in the moon, with a discourse concerning the possibility of a passage thither."

Among the various novel ideas in this book are speculations as to the possibility of men being able to use wings for purposes of flight. The Bishop wrote seriously enough on this preposterous proposal of a voyage to the moon; but apart from the extravagance of this particular book, he had many claims to be considered a genuine man of science. His other writings are of a different character, and during the Commonwealth he projected an association of scientific men, such as was afterwards realised in the Royal Society of London, under the presidency of Isaac Barrow and Isaac Newton. Bishop Wilkins was also one of the first to speculate upon the possibility of an universal language.

The next book of imaginary travel was a work entitled "Gerania: A New Discovery of Little sort of People, called Pygmies, their Stature, Habits, Manners, Buildings, Knowledge, and Government," written by one Joshua Barnes, and published in 1675. This is a forerunner of Gulliver's more famous description of Lilliput. To Joshua Barnes succeeded Daniel Defoe, who, before writing possible travels and adventures in Africa, Madagascar, the Pacific, and else-

where, was bitten by the mania for speculative journeyings, and in 1692 published a "Voyage to the World of Cartesius," which he followed in 1705 with his "Consolidator, or Memoirs of Sundry Transactions from the World in the Moon." Both books are satirical, and contain many hints of ideas afterwards developed by Swift in "Gulliver." A more extravagant production, which had no particular satirical purpose, but may be taken as an early and "curious"—in the booksellers' sense of the word—example of the Munchausen order of fiction, was published at Amsterdam in 1713, entitled "Gomgam, ou l'Homme Prodigeux transporté dans l'air, sur la terre, et sous les eaux." This was written by Laurence Bordelon, a French writer of plays and romances, who died at an advanced age at Paris in 1730. The book contains adventures which are very startling indeed, and which must be read to be believed. Five years later a small and now little known pamphlet, entitled "A Voyage to the Moon, with an account of the Religion, Laws, Customs, and Manner of Government among the Lunari, or Moonmen," was printed at Stamford. This was probably a version of part of one of the works of Cyrano de Bergerac, the Gascon satirist already mentioned.

But all these early journeys to the moon, and other outlandish regions, were in a few years thrown completely into the shade by the publication, in 1726, of the immortal "Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World," by that adventurous and veracious mariner, Captain Lemuel Gulliver. Swift's book, which is too well known to need comment, was at first issued anonymously, and it at once took the world by storm. "It was received," says Johnson, "with such avidity that the price of the first edition was raised before the second could be made; it was read by the high and low, the learned and illiterate. Criticism was for a while lost in wonder; no rules of judgement were applied to a book written in open defiance of truth and regularity." Most readers did not trouble themselves about the satire or the allegory of the work, but simply delighted in the vivid narrative, written in so simple and yet so forcible a style that the most monstrous impossibilities seemed almost to come within the bounds of the possible, and the most startling fictions wore the innocent air of indisputable facts.

Some simple souls even took the book literally. "'Gulliver' is in everybody's hands," wrote Arbuthnot to Swift, immediately after its publication. "Lord Scarborough, who is no inventor of stories, told me that he fell in company with a master of a ship, who told him that he was very well acquainted with Gulliver, but that the printer had mistaken—that he lived in Wapping, and not at Rotherhithe. I lent the book to an old gentleman, who went immediately to his map to search for Lilliput." It was soon translated into many European tongues, and became as popular abroad as it was at home. A Spanish translation was provided, with a warning to the reader, which must have been written by a humorist. This caution gravely reminded the Catholic reader that the work was written by a heretic dean, which, says the writer, accounts for the many glaring and wilful deviations from truth to be found in these travels.

The success of "Gulliver" gave rise in this country to a host of imitations, which, like most imitations, were all very markedly inferior to their model; but of these offshoots from the parent stem of Swift's work, one of the earliest was also one of the most original and successful. This was the "Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins," by Robert Paltock, which was published anonymously in 1750. It narrates the shipwreck of the said Wilkins in the neighbourhood of the South Pole, where he passes through a subterranean cavern into a new world, and there becomes acquainted with the Glumms and Gawreys, or men and women that fly, and has much wonderful information to unfold relating to these strange beings, their laws, and customs, and manners. The narrative is well written, and has been highly praised by many good judges. It has been translated into French and German; Coleridge spoke of it as a work of uncommon beauty; Leigh Hunt praises it, Southey was fond of it, and Lamb, when a boy, rejoiced in its adventurous pages. It was carefully reprinted in two convenient volumes several years ago.

A curious book of imaginary travels, which appeared a few years before "Peter Wilkins," was written in Latin by a Danish author, Baron Lewis Holberg. It contained an account of "The Subterraneous Travels of Niels Klim," and detailed that hero's journey to the world underground in a style probably modelled on "Gulliver," and

largely spiced with satire on the abuses of the Government. An English version of "Niels Klim" appeared in 1828. From this veracious narrative the reader may learn that in the world underground it is the custom of the doctors to prescribe books instead of medicine; and the author avers that he was himself cured of persistent sleeplessness by a well-chosen course of sermons.

The most popular successor to Peter Wilkins was the "Travels and Adventures of William Bingfield, Esq.," which appeared in 1753, and professed to contain "as surprising a fluctuation of circumstances as ever befel one man; with an accurate account of the shape, nature, and properties of that most furious and amazing animal the dog-bird." The book is rare and little known, for Sir Walter Scott wrote in his copy that he had long sought for one without being able to find a person who would so much as acknowledge having heard of Bingfield and his dog-birds.

The work seems to have been a favourite with Sir Walter, for he showed his copy to Southey when the latter visited him, and told him of the pleasure which it had given him. Southey was equally taken with "Peter Wilkins." All that the "Monthly Review," the chief critical magazine in 1753, could say of Bingfield's book was that it was fit for the kitchen. Many similar works seem to have had their little day of popularity; for the same review, a few years later, speaks contemptuously "of the whole tribe of the Devil Dicks, the apparitions, the Peter Wilkinsons, the John Daniels, the Dog-Birds, and all that endless train of which the teeming presses of our modern Curles have been so fruitful for some years past." The success of "Gulliver" had turned the attention of ingeniously speculative travellers away from the moon, which had formerly been the favourite goal for such voyages; but in 1765 an anonymous writer returned to the old paths, and published "A Trip to the Moon, containing an Account of the Island of Noibla, its Inhabitants, Religious and Political Customs, etc." This was appropriately said to be by "Sir Humphrey Lunatic," but the real author is unknown.

This book practically concludes the list of the older English books of imaginary travels, for except a fragment entitled, "An Additional Leaf to the Travels of Lemuel Gulliver. To be inserted in the authentic History of the Houyhnhnms,"

which appeared in the "European Magazine" of 1811, fiction of this kind appears to have been very little written, and was probably not much in demand, until the fashion was revived in France, by Jules Verne's marvellous tales of extraordinary journeyings to the moon, the centre of the earth, and other not very accessible regions. These tales have been extremely popular in England as well as abroad, although the powder of science—or what is intended for such—and the jam of miraculous adventure do not always form a very consistent whole. Our own literature of imaginary travel has been largely added to of late years by Mr. Rider Haggard and his imitators, and Mr. Haggard has truly found more marvels, and portrayed for his readers more moving scenes by river, mountain, and field in the Dark Continent, than explorer ever found or beheld, or ancient geographer, with natural love of the marvellous, ever dreamt of.

"OUTLAWED."

A SHORT SERIAL.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was six years afterwards. Mr. Brown and his daughter were returning from a voyage round the world. They were great travellers, and had visited during the past few years most of the quarters of the globe.

Hope, perhaps, was not so pretty as she had been at seventeen, but, at twenty-five, she was charming. She and her father were welcome guests wherever they went; but though they made many friends and acquaintances, they rather eschewed society as society, and were perfectly happy with each other.

Of the fashionable world Mr. Brown had a great contempt. He had despised and distrusted it ever since that dreadful day when he had been sent for to take his daughter, broken-hearted with shame, remorse, and grief, from Meadowlands. His bitterness and anger were so great that—the most generous-tempered of men as a rule—it was a long time before he would receive Mrs. Egerton's expression of regret, or accord her his forgiveness for her conduct to the girl he had trusted to her care. Even the dreadful shadow of grief which darkened her life for so many years scarcely lightened his bitterness.

In his anger he confounded all the inhabitants of the great world of rank and birth, and came to the conclusion that if that was all that could be expected from the hospitality of great families, it was better to live under the roof of an honest oil and colourman. Perhaps it was the failure of Mrs. Egerton herself that hardened him so much.

He had been so completely won over by her sweetness and graciousness that he felt that if she had failed him like this, what could be expected of the rest of her world? He deeply regretted that he had not taken Dornton's advice. As for that young man, he accepted the shortcomings of the aristocracy of birth and high breeding more philosophically, perhaps, because he had never expected so much from them.

"It's their confounded and idiotic pride!" he said. "It blinds them so completely that they actually think it is something of an honour for inferior beings to be sacrificed for them."

He had his own personal disappointment in that miserable tragedy.

It was hard enough, when, his patience rewarded, at last, with every thread of the net in his hand which would encompass the punishment of Wilfred Egerton, he had only run him to earth to find him dead. Maria Jenkins, whom he had known for some years, a clever, shrewd woman, and who had come at his instigation to nurse her uncle, had kept him perfectly well informed with all that went on at Meadowlands, while he was pursuing his enquiries in London, on the matter of the Australian's death and the robbery of the bonds. He had established the identity of Lady Musgrave with that of the woman who had visited the Australian that evening, and he knew that he could bring her forward as an important witness against Wilfred Egerton. He had carefully and laboriously collected evidence which would unfailingly convict him, and through Maria Jenkins's help, had discovered, not only that Wilfred Egerton was still hiding there, but also—that very night—the entrance to his hiding-place itself. But he came a second too late, and his chance of distinguishing himself, on that occasion, at least, was gone.

Yet, when he saw the dumb, white horror in Gilbert Egerton's face, as he stood there, the slayer of his brother, when he saw the anguish of the mother, bereaved of husband and son, and the son

by so tragic a means, he felt that the gratification of success would have been considerably mitigated.

Yet there was one ray of pure, personal pleasure in the darkness of that unhappy night.

He had himself met Hope as she was leaving Meadowlands an hour before, and divining the reason of the strangeness of her conduct in walking alone in the lanes at that hour of the night, he had insisted on taking her, in spite of her indignation and remonstrances, to Eason's cottage, and putting her under the charge of Maria Jenkins. It was, indeed, the extraordinary fact of finding her out alone at that hour of the night, which had given him the final clue which led to his discovery of Wilfred Egerton's hiding-place. He had hurried back into the grounds, suspecting that Wilfred Egerton meant to escape that night, and stealthily prying round the summer-house, had discovered the open entrance. He had given Maria Jenkins strict orders not to allow Hope to return to the house, fearing she would give a warning, and Hope, feeling that resistance on her part was not only useless, but that it might lead to the betrayal of Wilfred Egerton—for she did not yet know how much he knew—had at last submitted.

She was to have met Ned Molloy a little distance from the grounds. She could only trust that, when she did not come, he would suspect the cause, and for the sake of Wilfred Egerton, make good his escape.

This actually did occur. He was staunch to his old friend to the last. He had met his death since in a poaching fray, for he was incorrigible, and in spite of Gilbert's efforts nothing could be done with him.

It was Dornton who, when the first moment's awful shock of Wilfred Egerton's death had passed off a little, and they could think of Hope, was able to reassure them and bring her back to the house.

Mr. Brown had come the next day and taken her away.

Then, indeed, black days fell on Meadowlands. Wilfred's death made the whole matter public. There was an inquest, and Gilbert stood on his trial. The verdict was that of manslaughter, Mrs. Page and Dornton giving evidence as to the provocation he had received. It was impossible to keep Hope's name out of the matter.

The affair excited a general and painful

interest, and for months Meadowlands, with its domestic tragedy, stood in the full glare of public notoriety, in which, to a certain extent, Hope shared. But there was more to come. The Egertons and their housekeeper had connived at the escape of Wilfred Egerton.

Gilbert took the brunt of it on himself. In view of the painful facts of the case a lenient sentence was passed.

Out of those dark days Gilbert Egerton came another man.

He sent in his papers and left the service. He and his mother went abroad for some time, as her health had suffered much from all that she had gone through.

Meadowlands was shut up for three years; but they had returned there, and Gilbert, still unmarried, was living there now with his mother. There had been another death in the family—that of Wilfred Egerton's luckless wife, who in her last days had no longer to complain of the pride of her husband's family. She was very delicate, and was, indeed, dying when her husband was killed. She had, in spite of his sins, loved him dearly, and after his death she gradually sank. Mrs. Egerton and Gilbert, who sought her out, were very good to her.

And Hope? To the end of her life, she would bear in her the traces of that lurid episode of passion, bitterness, and cruel awakening. With the scathing shame of that brief but dreadful notoriety; with the glamour of romance, mystery, and his personal fascination faded; with the sin and heartless selfishness of Wilfred Egerton laid bare before her eyes; with the generous faith she had borne in his possibilities for better things torn from her in the revelations of his life which were made known to her, the passion of love which he had awakened in her died out utterly. In spite of her failings, which, after all, were those of youth and ignorance, it was impossible for her to love where she could not honour. Wilfred Egerton's life, when she knew it to be what it was, was a horror to her, and in his heartless attempt at her own betrayal she saw what the love of men such as he was worth.

The shock of her awakening was so great that for a long time, physically and mentally, she was almost prostrate. And there was always with her the keen remorse roused by her treatment of her father. What she would have done during those sad and ashamed days without his

tenderness and devotion she scarcely knew. Not one word of reproach did he utter. He gathered her into his great love and forgiveness and healed her. But the love and friendship that reigned between them to-day was a beautiful thing to see.

They had travelled a great deal during the past few years, beginning their wanderings first for her own mental and physical health, and continuing them at intervals afterwards for the pleasure they found in it.

The great house at Highgate, the magnificence and largeness of which had at first depressed Mr. Brown, was now, under her rule, transformed into a home; and to-day he gave his orders to his butler and coachman with the easy conviction that he would be obeyed with alacrity.

But it was a never-dying, secret gratification to him to remember how that grey-eyed, slim little girl of his, with her simple, pretty air of the great world, had come into the midst of those grand and condescending retainers, and in a day rearranged the balance of power, and placed him at the head of his own household. It was all done so unconsciously and quietly, that the solemn butler and the stately housekeeper found themselves taking their respective positions in the establishment as naturally and simply as the kitchen-maids themselves.

"Travelling is all very well in its way, but it is nice to be home again," said Mr. Brown, as they alighted from the train at Charing Cross.

"We won't leave it again for a year," said Hope decidedly; "not even for the summer. We really must begin to check our propensities to be 'rolling stones' for morality's sake. We are the unblushing exception to the worthy proverb. We gather so much 'moss' on our travels that soon there will be no room for us at home."

Her father went off with the footman, who had come to meet them, to point out some of the luggage; and Hope, standing a little out of the crowd of hurrying passengers and porters, looked on with contented, amused eyes, at the bustle and orderly confusion of a London station.

It was a crisp, bright spring afternoon, and the sunlight had penetrated even into the smoky, murky atmosphere of the station, and with the thought of home before her life seemed even more than usually worth living; even though that home was in the unfashionable quarter of Highgate, and she expected no share in the brilliant entertainments and social

existence generally of the great world of rank and fashion assembling for the season.

She glanced indifferently at several denizens of that exclusive sphere, who, travelling by the same train, were giving orders to their maids and footmen.

Two men at that moment caught sight of her.

Gilbert Egerton and Dornton had travelled up from Dover together that afternoon. Dornton had been down there on business. An old brother officer, with whom Gilbert Egerton was staying, had needed the services of a smart detective, and on Egerton's advice had sent for Dornton. The two returned to town together. Dornton's conduct in that dark past had resulted in a friendly acquaintance between the two young men, though, as was natural, considering the difference of their positions, they rarely met.

They caught sight at the same moment of the quiet figure in its neat and smart travelling-dress. Egerton went very pale and glanced away an instant. Dornton looked steadily at her, a strange, intent expression in his eyes.

"I haven't seen her for two years," he said quietly. "She has changed, but in a way she is lovelier than she was before—don't you think so?" with a quick, searching glance into his companion's face.

"Yes. Are you going off?" in some surprise as the detective nodded to him and began to turn away.

"Yes; remember me to them if you speak to them." And he disappeared among the people leaving the platform.

"It's no use playing with fire," he said, with a grim smile on his quiet face. "And there's no chance for me, though they still live at Highgate and are not known in society. I'll stick to my work." And he went back to his life of duty with the cool endurance and pluck and self-abnegation which he brought to bear on every piece of work that passed through his hands.

Gilbert Egerton, after a moment's hesitation, went up to Hope, who at the same moment was rejoined by her father.

They all three met occasionally. The young man had lived down, in Brown's mind, the prejudice the elder man had borne against him. He had discovered that Gilbert, at least, had disapproved of throwing Hope in his brother's society, and he had learned to like and respect the young man for his own sake. He knew, too, of his love for Hope. Two years ago

he had asked her to be his wife, and Hope had refused him. He had not troubled her again, and on the few occasions they had met since, his manner had been simply perfect. They greeted each other now with the pleasant cordiality of ordinary acquaintance.

Gilbert Egerton accompanied them to their carriage. Just as they were driving off, Mr. Brown leant out of the window and asked if he were making any stay in town.

He was going back next day.

"Come out and dine with us to-night, if you have nothing better to do!" said Mr. Brown. "I don't suppose many of your friends are in town yet."

The young man accepted.

"Father—suppose there is no dinner," said Hope as they drove off; "we have been away a whole year—and there's no knowing what may have happened. Mr. Egerton would probably have had a better dinner at his club."

"He didn't seem to think so, any way," said Mr. Brown cheerfully, but with a keen desire to know what that little careless speech meant. It could not be said that he desired the match.

He had a dread that if she married and returned once more to that fashionable world in which she had once suffered, it would still weave something of its fascinating spell over her, and that their lives would drift apart. But because of this very fear, lest it should be selfishness on his part, he would do nothing to stand between her and it, and among all the men who had wished to marry her, he had seen none who pleased him better than Gilbert Egerton. The young man arrived punctually. Outwardly he had changed little. He looked older, but in manner, appearance, and slowness of movement, he might still have been the smart young Guardsman with the suspicion of dandyism, who had languidly asked Miss Brown for a dance so many years ago.

But the difference in the inner man was wide, and slowly Hope had learned to recognise it.

In some subtle way she seemed to feel it more keenly than ever to-night. The dinner was a very pleasant one. The men enjoyed it thoroughly, and Hope made a charming hostess. But there was a shadow—a kind of perplexity, pathetic in its way—which lurked in her eyes as she smiled and talked to the two men.

Mr. Brown, pleased to find his feet under his own dining-table again, for once

failed to notice the gravity. But Egerton, in the same way that she was so keenly conscious of that deepening, and widening, and softening of the qualities of his own soul, was vividly, painfully aware of that troubled excitement in her. After dinner Mr. Brown went off to his study to see into some affairs that required his immediate attention, and during his absence Hope and Egerton inspected some of the things they had brought back with them from their last travels.

Hope had a fatal propensity of buying anything—in reason—that took her fancy, and the result was attended at times with inconvenience. Their purchases were sent home as they bought them, to await their own arrival, and many repentant vows did Hope make, as she unpacked and searched for new places for her treasures, that she would not buy another single object in her next travels.

"Only half the pleasure of travelling in out-of-the-way places will be gone," she said. "Isn't this delightful, Mr. Egerton?"

She held up a bowl of great antiquity, exquisitely wrought in silver, upon which she and her father had strayed in an Eastern bazaar.

He inspected it with an air of the greatest interest.

"And it is a curious souvenir, too!" she said. "My father and I, who were the only Europeans present, were suddenly surrounded by a body of fanatics, and but for my father's coolness, and the lucky arrival on the scene a few moments later of some of our own servants, who had had news of an intended attack, things would have gone badly with us. As it was, we escaped with our bowl; but I never wish to be in such a scene again. For nights afterwards I used to dream of the fierce faces closing in round us!"

It was an ordinary scene as they stood there now discussing the workmanship of the silver bowl in the light of the standard lamp, she in her pretty pink dinner dress and he in the orthodox black and white of evening clothes.

Mr. Brown, glancing in at them unobserved through the door as he passed it in the hall, thought that it was all right, and went back again to his study to finish what he was doing.

He was always thinking of her and watching over her, and he remembered now again that she had no mother, and that sometimes a girl, self-possessed and accustomed to be her own mistress as she

might be, was glad of the shielding presence of some one who had the right to come to her help.

She seemed happy enough as she talked with bright, interested face over the silver bowl to the young man who had wanted to marry her, and whom she had refused, so he went back to finish his letter.

But the young man who had been refused, though he was showing outwardly the greatest admiration for the rare old workmanship, was finding the situation at each instant more intolerable.

If she had seemed fair and desirable to him in the old days, when he had been weighted with all the prejudices and pride of his caste, and the arrogance of a lad who had never known defeat, she seemed ten times more so now, when he had been tried by humiliations and purified by suffering from the dross that had marred what was otherwise an honest and honourable nature.

And she was more desirable. Out of that furnace of suffering she, too, had come, sweeter, stronger, wiser—a woman worthy of the best man's love. And he felt himself very far from being the best man yet. He was to prove himself the next moment how far he could fail.

As he replaced the bowl on the cabinet near her, he was driven by the tumult of feelings surging, tormenting beneath his outward semblance of an ordinary young man in ordinary evening clothes, occupied with commonplace interests of every-day life, into the first deliberate act of unchivalrous cruelty to a woman of which he had ever been guilty.

"Courage is a great thing," he said slowly. "I remember there was once a time, Miss Brown, when you believed that I ran away from the enemy and then played the hero at home."

She started as the shot told, and fell back a step, looking at him with pale face, and something piteous in her eyes.

That little speech conjured up between them the whole of that dark, sad past, which till this moment had been tacitly ignored between them. The darkness, the shame, the misery of it, swept over her again.

He would have gone that moment cheerfully straight up to the guns, if he could,

by doing so, have unsaid the speech that had brought that look into her face.

"Hope, dear——"

"Ah, you should not. It hurts still," she said, forcing a smile, but with unsteady lips. "I didn't know, in those days; I was so silly, Mr. Egerton, and have often been ashamed since."

"I'm a brute; and I really thought I was improving." He tried to smile, too, but the effort was not exactly successful; indeed, as far as his personal feelings were concerned, it was a dismal failure. "But I've made a mistake again. Only I was just mad for the moment. You see, dear," very gently, as he saw her flushing and paling, "I still care so much. I can't help it. I am afraid I shall go on caring to the end; only you shall not be troubled by it again. I only forgot myself for an instant. It was just like that time in the hospital in Egypt, when I learned first that I was knocked out of all the fun, and that as far as I was concerned the campaign was over. All the glory seemed to have died out of one's life. Of course, it was a foolish idea. And I've had a good many blows since then, and ought to have been able to know I shall get over this, too. But I'll improve by degrees," with cheerful conviction, which vanished into saddened earnestness as he saw her still looking at him with that pale, troubled face. "Dear, don't you believe me? To prove it, if you tell me, I will go away now, and never attempt to see you again."

"No, it is different in some way. I cannot tell; I don't seem to know myself. Don't ask me—yet. And then there is father. But," almost under her breath, and looking away from the light dawning in his face, "if you would wait just a little longer, and not say any more now——"

How could she ever be his wife—for his own sake? Everybody had known, his friends would still remember, how she had nearly run away with Wilfred Egerton.

"Oh! how is it you can have been so good and patient? I am not worth it, Gilbert. I can't promise anything."

But he remembered the white rose he had taken so long ago from the mall of his dead ancestor, and went away content to wait even a little longer.

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A VALIANT IGNORANCE.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," "An Outstanding Debt," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MORE than one of the people who had talked to Mrs. Romaine in the interval had been vaguely aware of a certain uncontrollable preoccupation behind her vivacity of manner; though the intense, suppressed excitement in which that preoccupation originated passed undetected. Her restless eyes fastened upon Miss Pomeroy and Julian on the very instant of their reappearance in the room, and as they came towards her that excitement leapt up suddenly and lit up her whole face with a wild flash of hope and anticipation. They drew nearer and it died down again even more suddenly than it had sprung up; and in its passing it seemed to have aged her face curiously, and to have left upon it a stamp of heart-sick disappointment, touched with a deadly, creeping anxiety. Miss Pomeroy was pale, and her usual still placidity seemed to be accentuated into absolute stupidity. Julian's face was quite colourless, and beneath the travesty of his usual manner which he assumed in speaking to his mother, there was an indefinable expression which made him look ten years older and twenty years harder and more bitter.

Scruples on his part as to crushing their dress prevented his going home with them. He would follow in a hansom, he said. But before he arrived Miss Pomeroy had said good night to Mrs. Romaine with a neatly-turned and quite meaningless expression of the pleasure the

evening had given her, and had retired to her room. Mrs. Romaine, looking haggard and worn, lingered until Julian came in, and went out to meet him.

"Good night, mother," he said, and went straight upstairs without pausing.

It was many, many years since he had left her at night without a kiss; and as Mrs. Romaine went slowly up to her room through the silent house, she stumbled once or twice as though her wide, dry eyes hardly saw the stairs before her.

That creeping anxiety had gained ground greatly in her face the next morning when she came down at about half-past ten, to learn from the servant that "Mr. Julian" had already breakfasted and had gone to the Temple. Even more pathetic than that anxiety itself was the courage that battled against it; that strove so hard to become confidence as she led—and, indeed, sustained—the conversation, as she and Miss Pomeroy, who was late in putting in an appearance, breakfasted together. She talked lightly and gaily of Julian's defection on this their visitor's last morning; she deplored the fact that it was indeed the last morning, talking of various half-formed schemes for such constant meetings as would be practically a continuance of the intimate association of the past fortnight. But of response she obtained little or none. An access of conventionality, demureness, and insipidity seemed to be inspiring Miss Pomeroy; an access characterised by a certain absolute obstinacy of colourlessness. She had no opinions, no sentiments of any sort or kind to offer; her expressions of regret at leaving were as unmeaning as they were correct. Mrs. Romaine's plans seemed to wither under her little non-committal smile and comment; and she took her irreproach-

able leave an hour later with a vaguely-expressed hope that they might meet "somewhere," and apparently without hearing Mrs. Romaine's parting allusion to Julian.

Each one of the days that followed seemed to leave upon Mrs. Romaine's face some such effect—in a much more subtle degree—as might have been produced upon a marble counterpart of that face by the skilful application of a sharp modelling tool. Every feature became a little sharper; every line a little deeper, a little harder. Nobody noticed the fact, and nobody could have traced it to its source had they done so; for any expression other than that expression of gaiety which was habitual with her, was kept at bay even in her eyes. But there were times when she was alone, when in its very relaxation it became apparent how gallant the struggle was; how desperate was the courage which would not cease to be hope; times when that chisel under which she grew more haggard every day revealed itself as heart-sick, gnawing anxiety.

For three or four days Miss Pomeroy's hope that they might meet "somewhere" remained unfulfilled; and Mrs. Romaine made little jokes at what she assumed to be Julian's disconsolate condition—jokes which, taken in conjunction with the look in her eyes as she spoke them, were almost ghastly. Then the meeting took place at a party from which, as it appeared, Miss Pomeroy and her mother were just departing; so that a few words of greeting on either side was all that passed.

Mrs. Pomeroy and her daughter called on Mrs. Romaine a day or two later. It was Mrs. Romaine's "day," of course; the room was very full, and as Mrs. Pomeroy said, with an expression as near apprehension as was compatible with her placidity in the eyes which kept turning to her daughter's demure face: "Wednesday is such a popular day, and we've really dozens of calls to pay, haven't we, Maud?" Consequently they stayed barely ten minutes, and exchanged half-a-dozen sentences with their hostess. But short and formal as the call was, it was supplemented by no more intimate intercourse. They met, of course, nearly every day. That is to say, Mrs. Romaine, as she went about indefatigably from party to party, caught constant glimpses of Miss Pomeroy and

her mother just arriving as she left, just leaving as she arrived, just going to supper, to tea, to fulfil some social duty or other which made it impossible that more than a word or two should pass. When Mrs. Romaine pressed Miss Pomeroy with sprightly reproaches to come and see her, she was met invariably with pretty unmeaning smiles, and vague words about engagements, which, gentle as they sounded, proved as little capable of manipulation as a stone. Once or twice after such a meeting, Mrs. Romaine's jokes at Julian's expense, as she told him of them airily afterwards—Julian and Miss Pomeroy never seemed to meet now—took the form of hints and innuendoes as to whether he was not at the bottom of "the mystery," as she called it, and whether he could not perhaps sweep it away. There was a terrible contrast between the casual gaiety with which such hints were dropped by her, and the something which lay behind; something which gave her voice a strange, unnatural ring, and cut her words off almost before they had any meaning; something which dominated even that agony of anxiety; something the name of which, as it lurked in the hard, bright eyes which never met Julian's, was nervous fear.

Such hints were always met and turned by Julian as lightly as they were uttered.

Before a fortnight had passed since Miss Pomeroy's departure, Mrs. Romaine had acquired a habit of giving one quick, almost furtive, glance round any room she entered in which people were assembled, and that look was particularly eager and intent as she entered a drawing-room to fulfil an engagement for a luncheon-party one day at the beginning of the third week. A luncheon is by no means a bad opportunity for a "quiet chat." She did not see the figures she was in search of, though no one could have detected that fact from her expression. Nor could any one have interpreted the sudden exclamation of surprise she uttered. It sounded little more artificial than usual.

"Why, it's Dennis Falconer!" she said prettily. "I had no idea you were in town."

It was Dennis Falconer; not a little altered by the past eight months, and altered for the better. Six months earlier he had disappeared from the ken of his society acquaintances; disappeared quietly, almost imperceptibly. By-and-by, when his absence began to be commented upon,

rumour had whispered it abroad that he was "laid up or something." The fact, so lightly stated and equally lightly commented on, had meant for Falconer a realisation of the possibilities hinted at by his doctor early in November. He had passed from the dreariness of unoccupied and somewhat lonely club life into the infinitely heavier dreariness of an absolutely solitary sick-room.

Within his own limits and on his own lines Dennis Falconer was a strong man. With his dark hour absolutely upon him he braced himself to meet it with a stern, unconscious dignity; and he endured four months of physical suffering and mental tedium—from which that suffering, weary and unremitting as it was, was seldom acute enough to relieve him—with uncomplaining fortitude. He was quite alone. Circumstances had occurred to detain Dr. Aston in India, and his solitude was not realised by any of his club acquaintances. It was a period on which, in after life, he never willingly looked back; a dark hour, in truth. But it was lived through at last, and as it passed away it gave place to a clear and steady light, in which the shadows which had preceded it had vanished. Severe as had been the means, the end was amply attained. He emerged from his sick-room in such perfect physical health as he had not known for years. All the disabilities under which he had laboured during the preceding summer were removed, and in every nerve and muscle he was conscious of vigorous life. In May he had received his doctor's permission to return to his work, and he was in London now to arrange the preliminaries of an expedition with which he hoped to leave England early in the autumn.

The physical change in him was conspicuous as he stepped forward to return Mrs. Romaine's greeting. He looked ten years younger than he had been wont to look; the worn look of endurance had gone, and there was an air of strength and power about him which was very noticeable. Hardly less striking was the change in his expression. Much of the grim austerity of his demeanour during the previous summer had originated in the painful depression consequent on his state of health; much also in his realisation of his position as a man laid aside and solacing himself as best he might. The gravity and reserve of his expression remained, but the heaviness had disappeared completely.

His manner to Mrs. Romaine, as he shook the hand she held out to him, was significant of the lighter and more tolerant point of view from which his own lighter prospects unconsciously led him to contemplate his fellow-creatures. It was neither expansive nor friendly, but it lacked that undercurrent of stiff condemnation which had previously characterised it.

"I have intended to call on you," he said with grave directness. "I am sorry to appear negligent. But my time is no longer at my own disposal."

Mrs. Romaine put aside the claim on his time which he imputed to her with a quick gesture and a laugh.

"You are quite recovered, I hope?" she said easily. "Tiresome business, convalescence, isn't it?"

"I am quite recovered, I am thankful to say," responded Falconer; he was so keenly conscious of all that the words meant for him that he was insensible even to the jarring effect her manner had always had for him. "I hope before very long to be at work again. Indeed, I am practically at work now."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Romaine prettily. "Are you thinking of going abroad again?"

"I am going out to Africa. I shall hardly be in England again for another five years."

Mrs. Romaine had been looking vaguely about the room, evidently bestowing a modicum of her attention only on Falconer. But as he spoke the last words the slightest possible start passed through her frame and her wandering eyes suddenly ceased to wander. There was a moment's pause, and then she turned them on Falconer's face.

"Really? And when do you go?"

There was something rather odd beneath the carelessness of her voice, and her eyes, as she fixed them on Falconer's, were odd too.

"I hope to leave England early in October."

Mrs. Romaine made no reply. Her face suggested curiously that the actual exigencies of the situation had faded for her, that she was not in the present at all. For the moment there was no trace of that satisfaction and relief which would have been the natural consummation, on such news, of the defiance and distaste so hardly repressed in her manner to her "connexion" during the past year. She looked, apparently unconsciously, into the grave, steady man's face above her, and

there was a vague, half-formed expression in her eyes, which might have been a suddenly-stirred sense of loneliness or foreboding.

It was gone again in an instant. And as the man who was to take her into lunch approached her, she turned from Falconer with a little artificial gesture of farewell and the lightest possible "au revoir."

Falconer found himself very well situated at luncheon. A question came up on which his word carried weight, and the discussion which ensued brought home to him that sense of renewed power and standing in the world so grateful to him after his long period of inaction. He was full of grave content and satisfaction, when, after lunch, circumstances threw him again with Mrs. Romaine; and his whole mental attitude was suffused with a dignified kindness. He began to speak at once with grave, but not unfriendly interest, and as though he were conscious of a certain remissness.

"I am glad to hear of your son. I hope it is quite satisfactory to you?"

Mrs. Romaine had acknowledged his vicinity with a conventional word and smile. Circumstances demanded of her at the moment no active exertion; she was standing aside, as it were, for the instant, and there were tired lines faintly visible about her mouth. They disappeared, however, as if by magic beneath the hard intentness which leapt into her face as she turned sharply to Falconer on his first words. The movement was apparently involuntary, for she turned away, lifting the long eye-glasses which she had lately adopted with elaborate carelessness, as though to cover the first movement, and said, as she looked through them at something at the other end of the room:

"It's very stupid of me, no doubt, but I must ask you to explain!"

The careless neutrality of her previous conversation with him had vanished as completely as the strange suggestion with which it had ended had vanished; the amnesty which his tone had, perhaps unconsciously, proposed was tacitly refused. The old defiance, apparently entirely un-called-for, rang in her elaborately indignant voice.

"Is it so old a story?" said Falconer. "Or is it, perhaps, a mistake?" he added with genuine regret. "I hope not. A sensible marriage is such a safeguard, a

covenant with society. I heard of your son's engagement some three weeks ago on what purported to be excellent authority."

"Did you hear the name of the young lady by any chance?"

Mrs. Romaine achieved a harsh little laugh as she spoke.

Falconer glanced round the room and lowered his voice.

"Miss Maud Pomeroy!" he said. "A most desirable wife for him, I should have said!"

Eight months before, under the inexplicable influence of the face and manner of the pale, dignified woman who had faced him so bravely in the little lodging in Camden Town, Dennis Falconer had been almost ready to urge upon Julian Romaine marriage with the girl he was supposed to have ruined. But he would have done so convinced in the recesses of his heart to which that woman's influence could not penetrate that such a course must mean ruin to the young man; and in the grim severity of his mental attitude at the time, he would have said that such ruin was the just and righteous consequence of the young man's guilt. Clemence's disappearance had frustrated the possibility of any such action on his part; time and the pressing actualities of his own life had obliterated the impression made on him; and the whole affair had gradually faded into the past. Insensibly to himself he looked upon it now, conventionally enough, as one of those dark episodes which are in no way to be obliterated or lightened, but which may and must be overlaid. To that end it seemed to him, in the relaxation of his sterner attitude, a thing so natural as to be necessarily condoned that Julian should marry in his own class and settle down.

A moment's pause followed on his words. Mrs. Romaine was sweeping the room with her eye-glasses. The hand which held them shook a little, and, if the man beside her could have known it, she saw absolutely nothing.

"Maud Pomeroy!" she said at last, and she seemed to be unconscious of that moment's interval of silence. "Ah! Well, to tell you the truth, that is not such an extraordinary report, though it hardly represents the fact—at present. Young people will be young people, you know, and they must be allowed their little wilfulnesses!"

She also had lowered her voice, though it was high-pitched and strained, and

her speech was almost exaggeratedly confidential. Influenced by the tone into which they had thus fallen Falconer said meaningly and not unkindly:

"You have had to make no more serious allowances, I hope—since?"

With a laugh so light and high as to be painfully out of tune, Mrs. Romaine answered him gaily in the negative. One little peccadillo, she said, was not such a very terrible thing in a young man's record, and she was charmed to say that with that little affair of which they both knew her anxieties on Julian's account had begun and ended. She held out her hand to Falconer as she finished her assurance, parting with him with her brightest air of society friendliness, and as he wished her good-bye, looking down into the trivial vivacity of her face, Falconer felt himself stirred for the first time by a certain touch of pity for her. Coming upon his softer mood and the comparatively friendly nature of their talk, the eager assurance with which she spoke struck him as being not without pathos. He had no confidence in Julian, and it occurred to him vaguely and with a sense of surprise that if the security so superficially founded should prove false, the blow would be somewhat disproportionate to the lightness of the nature on which it must fall. The next instant he recollected how largely her own actions would have contributed to bring about the blow, and he dismissed her sternly from his thoughts as she passed out of the room.

Mrs. Romaine went straight home, though she had numerous calls on her list for the afternoon; her eyes were even desperately bright and defiant; and that same evening Marston Loring received a note asking him to come and see her on the following day.

He found her waiting for him in the drawing-room at the hour she had appointed, and she plunged into the matter in hand with an affectation of spontaneous confidence which was most effective; not only effective in itself, perhaps, but as a mask.

She had sent for him in his capacity of fellow-conspirator, she told him; she was in a little perplexity and she was turning to him, as usual—this with a charming smile—to help her. From this prelude she went on to speak of the strange change which had come about in the relations between herself and Julian on the one hand, and the Pomeroy on

the other. Loring's keen eyes had detected this change some time since—by this time, indeed, it was being whispered about somewhat freely—but he only listened with grave attention. The upshot of her speech was: did Loring know anything about it? Had Julian said anything? Had he spoken of any quarrel, of any misunderstanding? Had his friend any kind of clue to give her as to his feelings on the subject?

The artificial ease and gaiety of her manner which strove to give to the whole thing something the air of a joke, was disturbed and broken as she came to the point by a strange excitement about which there was nothing gay or light. And some uncertainty as to how far she had gone seemed to pervade her mind and to produce a feeling that some kind of explanation was necessary.

"You see," she said, "it isn't always safe to go to the fountain-head in these little matters! A young man doesn't always care to be questioned by his mother! One might 'give offence,' you know!" Her tone was playful, but her eyes were filled with the nervous fear which lurked in them so often when she and Julian were alone together, and the look on her face as she spoke her last words seemed to give to that fear a definite object. It was the fear of "giving offence" to her son.

Loring put the explanation aside with a smile, but he had no words of enlightenment for her. Julian, he said, had preserved a total silence on the subject.

"I will see what I can do," he said finally, with a smile that cancelled the offensiveness of the intention conveyed of "pumping" his friend. "And we will confer further. Meanwhile, I know you will like to hear that his financial proceedings are prospering exceedingly, and are discretion itself!"

But the further conference, which took place in a day or two, was entirely fruitless as far as its nominal purpose was concerned. Loring did not reveal to Mrs. Romaine the exceeding brevity and decision with which Julian had dealt with any and every attempt to lead the conversation towards the Pomeroy, but he gave her to understand that at present he had nothing to tell her.

One night, about a week later, when she and her son came home in the dawn of the July day from a series of "at homes," Mrs. Romaine, instead of saying good night to Julian at the door of

her room, as was her custom, laid her hand suddenly on his arm and drew him just across the threshold. Her face was white to the very lips, and there was a set desperation in it stronger even than the fear with which her eyes were full. Her voice, as she spoke, was breathless and uncertain as though her heart beat with painful rapidity.

"Julian," she said, "what is it that has gone wrong between you and Maud Pomeroy?"

A flash, so quick in the passing that its intense bitterness was not to be detected, passed across Julian's face; it seemed to leave him armed with an expression of determined brightness which defied all emotion or sentiment.

"I don't know that anything has 'gone wrong,' dear," he said lightly.

His mother's hold on his arm tightened desperately.

"I saw what happened to-night in the supper-room," she said. "Won't you"—her voice broke, and there came to it a strangely beseeching note—"won't you tell me what it is?"

Julian's face grew rather set, and he paused a moment. Then he said, still in the same tone:

"It is nothing that I need worry you about, dear."

"Something might be done. If I knew what it was it could be set right, I know."

"No, dear!" The words came from Julian quickly and instantly, and there was a decision and significance behind his light tone now. Her speech had created a necessity, and he rose instinctively to meet it. "I'm awfully sorry to distress you, but I assure you nothing can be done. A girl must be allowed to know her own mind, you know. And a certain little question asked and answered, the only thing left to the fellow is to retire gracefully. I'm awfully sorry you are cut up about it; I was afraid you would be. Never mind, dear. I'm in no particular hurry."

He had gained in fluency and expansiveness of manner as he proceeded; the expedient had only occurred to him on the spur of the moment; and as he finished he bent down and kissed her lightly on the forehead.

"Good night," he said. "Sleep as well as I intend to do."

He left her with a nod and a smile, shutting the door behind him, and Mrs. Romaine stood for a moment motionless,

as she had received his kiss, staring at the door through which he had disappeared. Then she began to rub her hands feebly against one another as though a great cold had seized her. She was trembling from head to foot.

"Failed!"

She spoke the word half aloud in a low, shivering tone, which gave to its isolated utterance a strangely weird effect.

CONCERNING SOFAS.

WE entertain a tolerably well-grounded suspicion that Mr. William Cowper's poem of "The Task" belongs to the category of books which are talked about more than they are read. It may be news, therefore, to some of our readers that its composition was enjoined upon him by his friend Lady Austen, and that she it was who directly suggested the theme of the first book, or canto. She had frequently urged him to try his powers in blank verse; and, after repeated solicitations, he promised compliance if she would furnish him with a subject. "Subject!" she cried; "oh, you can never be in want of a subject! Write upon any; write upon this sofa." He took the hint, and the subject, and wrote in strong and manly lines upon the sofa. Now, we can imagine the disdain with which our latter-day poets, who are never contented unless they are losing themselves in dreams of the mythological past or anticipations of an impossible future, would receive a command or an entreaty to dedicate their muse to a topic so realistic and commonplace. But, wiser than they, the poet of Olney at once perceived that Lady Austen had set him a subject which, as Dr. Johnson said of Mr. Thrale's brewery, had a "potentiality" of wealth in it, from its intimate connection with the comfort and happiness of the race.

So Cowper wrote, and wrote well, upon the sofa; not in ballade, rondeau, or triolet, but in good sound decasyllabic blank verse, as Milton had done when he sang of "Paradise Lost," and Ambrose Philips when he celebrated the virtues of "Cider." He traced its developement, after a fashion not unworthy of a Darwin or a Wallace, from the three-legged stool which probably served King Alfred as a throne—through the successive stages of the four-legged stool; the cane-chair, stiff and upright; the elbow-chair, invented, no

doubt, by some fat monk, burly and big, and studious of his ease; and the soft settee, devised, we may assume, for the special convenience of a Strephon and his Della, on the principle that "two are company, and three are none"—to the luxurious and all-indulgent sofa, which so happily provided for the relaxation of the languid frame and the soft recumbency of outstretched limbs. Having done justice to this process of evolution, and its felicitous outcome, he broke out into a strain of rapturous eulogium, protesting that sweet and sound as might be the mid-night sleep of the hired nurse, like Mrs. Gamp's in the bedroom of the sick Chuzzlewit, or of the weary coachman when waiting for his lady at the opera, or of the curate in his desk with the tedious rector drawling over his head, it was not so sweet and sound as the poet's repose on his luxurious sofa.

Who was the inventor of the sofa? History, which records so many names of less importance, has neglected to procure that of a man whom posterity would have delighted to have honoured as a benefactor of his race. No doubt the idea of it came from the East, where, from time immemorial, princes and potentates, sheikhs and ameers, have passed their idle hours—of which they seem always to have had an ample supply at their disposal—on the soft and yielding cushions of the divan. They have received ambassadors, entertained guests, administered justice, declared war, and made peace, reclining easily or sitting cross-legged on the purple musnid, or seat of honour. So says the poet Moore: "Upon his couch the veiled Mokanna lay." They had their so-called thrones—some of these Powers of the East—such as the Peacock Throne of Delhi, and that more wonderful structure, the Firozeh, or Cerulean Throne of the Deccan, which, according to Ferishta, was nine feet long and three feet broad, made of ebony, covered with plates of pure gold, and crusted with precious stones of fabulous value—a throne fit for an Emperor. But the customary seat of Royalty was the musnid. The Spanish ambassadors who visited the Court of the famous Timur speak of him as seated upon gold-embroidered cushions of great costliness, and it is to something of the kind that quaint old Knolles refers when he describes "Selymus the Second" as "sitting upon a pallet, which the Turks call mastabe, used by them in their chambers to sleep and to feed upon,

covered with carpets of silk." The Turks, as we know, carried their divans and their cushions to Constantinople, and thence they passed onward to Paris, where some ingenious upholsterer placed the divan or framework upon legs, furnished it with a back and arms, and mounted the whole upon castors, so that, unlike the Oriental original, which was built up against the wall, it could be moved from place to place. This was the genesis of the sofa, which we do not hear of, we think, before the Louis Quatorze age.

We venture to suppose that it made its way about the same time to the Court of Charles the Second, for the couch, of which we read in the pages of the Elizabethan dramatists, must not be confounded with the sofa. It was soon naturalised, as it were, in "the stately homes of England." By the time that the House of Hanover had taken possession of the Crown, it was recognised as an article of furniture indispensable to every well-to-do family. We can fancy Swift's "Vanessa," or Steele's "dearest Prue," or the lovely Mary Lepel, or the fair Bellenden reclining in graceful ease on the sofa, in an attitude ingeniously contrived to do justice to a well-proportioned figure and expose just a modest glimpse of a well-shaped ankle. Room would be found for a favoured swain, perhaps, who, thrown back in a cosy corner, would hardly be less solicitous than the lady to show off the graces of his person. It is clear, indeed, that if the sofa had not occupied a prominent place in society, Lady Austen would never have proposed to Cowper to write a poem upon it.

In those days, however, it could not be overlooked; a cumbrous structure, it could be accommodated only in the reception chambers of the mansions of the gentry, for the eighteenth century sofa, like the eighteenth century bed, was of Brobdingnagian dimensions, as be seemed a structure dedicated to the heaps of fine ladies and the square-cut coats and ruffles of fine gentlemen. Numerous allusions occur to it in the pages of Fielding and Madame d'Arblay, and from these its generous size can readily be inferred. But, by degrees, a lighter and handsomer article superseded the sofa in aristocratic interiors—a dainty affair, radiant with velvet, silk, or damask—which assumed the designation of couch, ottoman, or settee, according to circumstances. The sofa then became the property of the middle

class ; and it is curious to observe how completely it is now banished from the pages of our fashionable novelists. No one can imagine Ouida's heroes or heroines taking their rest upon anything less distinguished than a couch. They may recline on an ottoman, or enjoy a tête-à-tête on a settee, but to deposit their beauty or their bravery on the democratic sofa—the sort of thing which you see in the front parlours of six-roomed suburban villas—is plainly impossible. Whether it is known in the show-rooms of West End upholsterers we are by no means certain. A specimen or two may possibly be kept for the convenience of customers with old-fashioned tastes ; and this, we should imagine, is about all. For ourselves, we have not the least doubt that the plebeian sofa is a very much more comfortable affair than the fashionable couch, but we are constrained to admit that its popularity has departed, and that no Lady Austen nowadays would ask a poet to celebrate it in blank or any other verse.

IN LONDON : AND OUT OF IT.

PART II. IN IT.

WE are told that London is the rich man's paradise. So it is, in the sense in which the whole world is the rich man's paradise. But, comparatively ? Hardly. London is not in so peculiar a degree the rich man's paradise as the country is. The moneyed man in the country takes standing with the gods. He is a being set apart. He is hedged about with the divinity which, theoretically, surrounds a King. He dispenses the law ; and, not seldom, he is above the law. He is a power in all the countryside. It is as good as a course of lessons in human nature to see the fuss which is made over a local great man at, say, a country railway station. He condescends to let the officials know that he is coming. The station-master receives him with his hat in his hand. Every soul about the premises is anxious to be before his fellows in giving him reverential salutation. For the time being there is no one in the station but that great man. If you, being an innocent, unoffending stranger, stand staring, wondering what is all at once the matter, "Now, sir, if you please. Make room for Sir Aaron Moses !" In the country it is only the rich man who goes dryshod in dirty weather. It is only the rich man who can move about at his

ease in all weathers and at all hours of the night. It is only the rich man who can enjoy the pleasures which the country has to offer. It is only the rich man who can eat what he pleases. It is only the rich man who ever has a chance of relieving that hideous monotony which is the yokel's hardest heritage.

In the country the poor man is bound. In London he is free ; there is no street he may not tread ; there is no form of enjoyment he may not share. In public places he is the equal of the millionaire. He must be a poor man indeed if, in dirty weather, he cannot ride in carriages. For a few coppers he can ride anywhere and everywhere. He is as well off, as regards means of locomotion, as the man who spends a thousand pounds a year upon his stable. The pleasures of the palate are not cut off from him. He is not restricted in his choice of foods. All the produce of all the seas and countries of the earth is offered in the London streets, in good condition, and at prices which bring it within the reach of all but the pauper. The artisan has the choice of innumerable dining-rooms, in which a constant variety of well-cooked meats and vegetables may be obtained for sums which are well within his means. There is, in London, no hour of the day or night in which he cannot obtain something to eat or drink, and something which is just the thing he wants. As for the poor man who, in social position, is supposed to be just above the artisan, for a shilling he can have a sumptuous hot dinner every day of his life ; and he has his choice of ten or a dozen dishes every time he sits at table. He is always welcome, every whit as welcome as the millionaire, and he receives exactly the same treatment which would be meted out to Sir Aaron Moses, if Sir Aaron Moses were to take it into his head to dine for a shilling.

Palaces are kept up in London, not only not especially for the rich man, but for the poor man first of all. To how many places of free public resort is he invited—an invitation of which he, very rightly, does not scruple to avail himself whenever he is in the mood. Think of the constantly increasing number of free libraries, of art galleries, of museums, of recreation grounds, in which he is solicited to make himself at home. He gets there, for nothing, what he could not get in the country in exchange for the whole earnings of his life. It is getting to be more and more

understood that a great city is, practically, an aggregation of poor men, and that, therefore, it behoves a great city, before all the other portions of the world, to be the poor man's paradise.

A poor man need know no monotony in London, and to realise what that means it is necessary to know something of that outer darkness of monotony which imbrutes the countryman. A bewildering variety of entertainment is offered to him on every hand. For nothing at all, or in exchange for the most trivial sums, he can become acquainted with all art, and science, and literature. He can listen to the best of music—and the worst.

But his perennial, and his cheapest, and perhaps his best entertainment may be derived from the mere presence of the great city itself. Few of the wise men seem to realise—is it because they themselves have none of them ever been poor?—what a happy hunting-ground to the poor man are the London streets. They are always with him, and, though he may not put his thanks into concrete form, he still is thankful that they are. They are all in all to him; they are much more to him, for instance, than the countryside is to the countryman. And there is a reason why this should be so. That reason is, that not only the proper, but the most engrossing, study of mankind is not inanimate nature, but man. Rich folks meet each other in each other's drawing-rooms. Society is all the world to them, and society is a good part of the world to the poor man, too; only his drawing-room is the London streets, and I am not sure that his drawing-room is not almost as good an one as the rich man's. At any rate, it serves his purpose quite as well.

Many well-intentioned people seem to think that it is unbecoming for a man or a woman to what they call "hang about" the streets. I have been more than once at a loss to quite grasp their meaning. They sometimes go so far as to declare that it is not respectable. Well, that depends. It depends, I conceive, a good deal upon what one hangs about the streets for. There are a good many people, for instance, who "hang about" the streets for pretty much the same reason for which their richer brothers and sisters, at certain hours, "hang about" Rotten Row. Why is one a sinner in the one case rather than in the other? Some one replies: "Think of the bad characters who do frequent the streets!" If we are to keep away from all

the places which are frequented by bad characters, we counsellors of perfection had better at once "make tracks," say, to Mars! Are there no bad characters in Rotten Row, I wonder?

Says one body of censors of other people's manners and other people's morals: "It may be all very well to frequent the streets in the daytime, but—after dark? Ought a respectable man or woman to frequent the streets at night?" There is one sufficiently obvious answer to such a question. If people were only to frequent the streets in the daytime, an enormous number of Londoners would, practically, never be able to set foot in them at all. Most people in London are at work all day. Their only chance to take their pleasure is at night. To attempt, on any plea whatever, to keep these people out of the streets at the only time at which they can get into them would be to attempt to perpetrate an act of criminal selfishness, of which we can only hope few persons would be willing to be guilty.

But, continue the censors, think of the promiscuous acquaintances which are made! People who talk like this are either oblivious, or ignorant, of the fact that all men and women are not run into the same mould. A promiscuous acquaintance is, roughly speaking, an acquaintance made haphazard. A good many of us can look back, and say, unhesitatingly, that some of our pleasantest acquaintances have been made haphazard.

It is curious how ignorant one set of people, at least, appear to be of the conditions under which another set of people live. Hosts of young men in London would never have an opportunity of knowing a young woman at all if it were not for the promiscuous acquaintances which they are, I venture to say, fortunately able to make with them in the streets. And the same thing applies to multitudes of young women—if they had to wait for social introductions they never would know a young man. What chance have the generality of clerks, and shop assistants, and such like of getting into any sort of society? You say, that with such persons, there ought to be no intercourse between the sexes; that, while they occupy such positions, they ought not to think of marriage. But they never will rise, appreciably, above the positions which they are occupying now. That is not their fault. It is certain, as a rule, that it is

not their fault—fate and circumstances, all the conditions of their life are against them. And, on that account, because of their poverty, are they not amenable to the laws which govern our common nature? Are they not to enjoy the pleasures which, because of their position, are perhaps the only pleasures they can enjoy? If you think so, we are not likely to agree. Because, in spite of the wise men and of the political economists, I see no reason, but very much the contrary, why the poor man and woman should not get as much pleasure out of life as the rich man and woman—if they can. At any rate, they have my heartiest wishes for the success of their attempts to do so.

I love the London streets, and, perhaps, pre-eminently at night. There is, for me, a magic in the London streets at night which you shall scarcely meet elsewhere. I have wandered, many and many a time, to and fro in them, from west to east, from north to south. There is a something in the air, which has nothing to do with the chemical constituents of the actual atmosphere, which, in certain moods, acts upon the blood in one's veins like wine. This is not a fancy, which is peculiar to an individual. I have been told the same thing, over and over again, by men and by women too. Is it strange that the rustic, fresh from the gloom and monotony of his native village, when he begins to realise the presence of this something in the London streets at nights, finds that it enthralls him as with the glamour of some supposititious fairyland? Have you known many country folks, out of the books and the plays, who, after once knowing, really knowing London, were willing to return—for good, as they have it—to their villages? I, personally, cannot recall a single case. But I have known, and do know, country folks who would not return from whence they came for a good deal more than I am likely to be able to offer them. Ask ninety-nine country wenches out of a hundred, who have known service in town, to accept a permanent place in the country, and "make a note" of their answers.

It is not suggested that the poor man's life, in London, is without its seamy side; that it is all "beer and skittles"; that it knows no "kicks"; that it is all "half-pence." One is merely expressing a modest, but, I believe, well-founded opinion, that the poor man is better off in the town than in the country; that it

is by no means surprising that, as the statisticians inform us, able-bodied rustics, of both sexes, are deserting their native hamlets to try their fortune in the cities.

A poor man is not very well off anywhere. That, as things are, is one of the conditions of his poverty. It may be different later on in the new world which, according to some prophets, is coming by-and-by. But the millennium is not yet, nor, to the ordinary vision, are there many signs of its approach visible on the horizon. But, bearing this in mind—that a poor man is not very well off anywhere, I should like to be told, definitely, in what respect he is not, at least, as well off in London as out of it.

It is true enough that, in certain districts of the metropolis, he is housed in a manner which is a disgrace to our so-called modern civilisation. The slums of London are our perpetual shame. But does any one suppose that there are no slums in the country? I doubt if there is a village in England which cannot show sights of that sort equal to anything which can be seen in town. What do you say to hovels built on the edge of a fetid pond which is always giving off foul miasmatic vapours, and which in winter overflows its banks, and covers the floors of the human pigsties—the floors of the rooms in which human beings sleep!—with oozy, stinking mud? What do you say to farmhouses—what pictures the mention of farmhouses is apt to conjure up to the imaginative vision of a Londoner, pictures, too often, how bitterly unlike the unsavoury reality!—I ask, what do you say to wooden-built, ramshackle, tumbledown farmhouses standing in the middle of a muck-yard—a muck-yard which, at any season of the year, renders it impossible to approach the house dry-shod, and which, for perhaps six months of the year, causes the house to be surrounded by an evil-smelling morass? I know London as well as most men. I know some of its salubrious neighbourhoods—Strutton Ground, Lower Marsh, the slums about Drury Lane, the Mint, Houndsditch, Shoreditch, a dozen other districts, the very names of which are nightmares. But I know nothing in London, in the shape of housing for the poor, which is worse than some of the "housing" which I know in the country. In London the poor folk can find other quarters—and they do. In the country they, practically, cannot. They live and die in the dirty den in which they struggled into life. There

is nowhere else they can go to, except the "house," or unless they are wise in their generation, and turn their backs upon the country and journey to the town. In London, again, sanitary inspection is not a dead letter. In the country it too often is. The rich men, on whose properties the poor folks' dwellings are apt to stand, are our magistrates and rulers. Sanitary inspectors know their duty too well to interfere with them. In London, still once more, there is a great and general movement which all men are endeavouring to help forward, for the better and more convenient housing of the poor, and they are being housed better and better every day. If any such general movement is taking place in the country, it is strange that, up to the present, the secret has been so well kept from the world.

Certainly rents are higher in the town than in the country, but, then, so are wages. I wonder what able-bodied labourer in London, skilled or unskilled, is content to put in a full week's work for anything like twelve shillings? If the London labourer were disposed to live as the country labourer lives, I am inclined to think that he could do it every bit as cheaply. But he is not so disposed. If the city workman in full work were often to go without meat for his dinner, his wage being such as to render it impossible for him to purchase it, I fancy that it would soon be mentioned in the papers. Mr. Burns, and Mr. Mann, and Mr. Tillett, and the rest of the wise would soon raise a storm about our heads. Compared with the agricultural labourer, the metropolitan artisan fares sumptuously every day of his life, and he is better off in the end, in spite of it. It is not the rule, with him, to finish his days in the workhouse. It is the rule with the agricultural labourer.

The townsman has all the world in front of him. It would be nonsense to say that he can be what he pleases—despite the teachers of the doctrine of "Self-Help"—but he has a chance of becoming better off than he is. Hodge has no such chance—while he continues to be Hodge. He is just as much a member of a caste as any Hindoo, and he has no chance of rising out of that caste—practically the lowest caste of all the castes—unless he cuts the Gordian knot and goes to try his fortune in a town.

One hears a good deal about the "temptations" of a great city. Of course there are temptations in a great city. But some people seem to be unaware that there also

are temptations out of it. I was talking, recently, to a friend, who has been residing for some time in a north country village, about the comparative amount of vice to be found in the country and in towns. He made the startling statement that, to the best of his belief, there was not a young woman of marriageable age in that north country village who had not had an illegitimate child. I say that that was a startling statement. But undoubtedly that particular form of human frailty is unpleasantly conspicuous in not a few of the most secluded hamlets.

There is another sort of temptation which some people seem to think exists only in cities—the temptation of drunkenness. Such people are the victims of an extraordinary delusion. In nine villages out of ten that is the only sort of amusement which the majority of the inhabitants have. Their one notion of enjoyment is to get drunk. It is not their fault—it is the only description of entertainment which offers. There must be many villages in which every inhabitant, at some period or other of his life, was an habitual drunkard—that is, he got drunk whenever he got the chance. Of what city in the world could you say that? I was once in a village on the Welsh coast. The Welsh, I have been informed, are a sober people, and so some of them may be. A certain wicked traveller chanced to come that way. According to his own account, he had "struck oil" in the Western States of America—and, possibly, he had "struck" some peculiar notions, too. For a whole week he "stood Sam," at the local hostelry, to everybody who chose to come and drink. For a whole week every soul in the place, to all intents and purposes, was drunk—all the men, many of the women, and some of the children. The occasion offered, and they rose to it. They had never before enjoyed themselves so much in their lives—that being their idea of enjoyment. No doubt, to this hour, many of those amusement-seekers look back to that week as being the most amusing week they ever spent. I know, or, rather, I used to know, a village in Devonshire, in which every able-bodied man used to regularly subscribe to a common fund. It was an ancient custom, and, possibly, still survives. To what purpose do you suppose that fund was applied? To making every subscriber—that is, every able-bodied man in the place—drunk, dead drunk, I fancy, but certainly drunk, on

cider, on certain appointed high days and holidays. Talk of the temptation which a great city offers to a countryman to fall into drinking habits! What singular notions some folks seem to have!

The picture is not all shadow in the country, any more than it is all light in town. Men, places, and things, the varying conditions of life, have not only two sides, they have many sides. The point is, that more people are acquainted with the state of things in great cities than with the state of things in rural districts. The reason is obvious. Townspeople are in an enormous majority, and, as a matter of course, they are better acquainted with the conditions which prevail among themselves, than with the conditions which prevail among their more or less distant neighbours. The consequence of this is what might be expected. They know what burdens they have themselves to bear, they know how heavy they are, they know that they show no signs of diminishing either in quantity or in quality. It seems strange to them that others should be willing, nay, anxious, to take these burdens on themselves. They do not seem to suspect that those others may be staggering under even heavier loads than they themselves. They see the country, when they see it at all, under the pleasantest conditions, and they only see its pleasantest aspects. The countryman is apt never to see these pleasantest aspects at all. First, because familiarity breeds contempt. How is it that Londoners see nothing in some of those aspects of the great city which fill the rustic with speechless admiration? Is it because an essential constituent of admiration is the element of novelty, surprise? And, second, the country is at its best—from the townsman's point of view—for so brief a season; while the hardships of his lot are with the countryman year in and year out, from the rising up to the going down of the sun; ay, and, too often, in the weary watches of his night to boot.

One may be excused for wishing that those gentlemen, who, on the platform and in print, are in the habit of deploring what they call the rural exodus, would fill, at least for a time, the places which once were filled by those wanderers in search of a promised land. Why should a man, who is at his ease amidst the luxuries and conveniences of a great city, reproach his brother for disliking to be uneasy amidst the hardships and inconveniences of a

rural district? It is easy to say that there must be agricultural labourers. Let those who say so prove the faith that is in them by becoming agricultural labourers themselves. But do not let them put pressure upon others to exemplify that faith vicariously. It may be true that England, without agriculture, would fade into nothingness. But I have my doubts, and I am certain that no country can be said to be holding its own, if, to enable it to do so, it is absolutely necessary that a large portion of its population shall live the lives which agricultural labourers in England live to-day.

If agricultural labourers choose to continue to be agricultural labourers, so be it. But if you wish them to make that choice, you will have to do, at least, one thing—you will have to confine education to the towns. That is the cause of all the change—education. The fathers and the mothers are rooted to the soil. The sons and the daughters are not yet rooted. You are teaching them what being rooted to the soil means. You are also teaching them that they have a choice in the matter; and though, probably, many of them are conscious that it is only between two evils, they are disposed to choose what seems to them, as it appears to me, for sufficient reasons, to be the lesser.

England has seen many prophets of disaster. Yet she is England still. Not impossibly she may continue to be England, little great England, yet a little longer. Even though the countryfolk continue to desert the rural districts in ever-increasing numbers, and the agricultural problem assumes a phase which England, as a nation, shall be constrained to gird up her loins and face—as she has faced problems every whit as difficult before to-day. When that time comes, I doubt if any one will be found who will be willing to maintain that a man ought to be content to work, at the most arduous labour, in exchange for his bare daily bread, his whole life long, and then that his last words ought to be an expression of gratitude to his country, as, cut off from the woman who shared his sorrows—he had no joys!—he dies in the workhouse at the end.

WHERE DENMARK'S KINGS LIE.

THE Cathedral of Roskilde in Zealand, about seventeen miles west of Copenhagen, is the Westminster Abbey of Denmark.

At least, it is so inasmuch as it holds the dust of most of the more recent monarchs of Denmark and Scandinavia—when the North was, as seems fit, a united kingdom—with that of their wives and children. Of the national heroes it has no such record as our precious Abbey. In so far, therefore, it makes but a limited appeal to our sensibilities. Kings and Queens are not in themselves very impressive objects: their dust—unless in life they were exceptional beings—stimulates to reflection much less than the ornate caskets of silver, copper, and other decorated material which holds it.

In summer Roeskilde must be a charming little town. It stands on a knoll at the head of a branch of the Isse Flord. The Cathedral occupies the very crest of the hill. From it you look north immediately upon the arm of the sea, though between it and the actual shore are trees and snug villas of fretted woodwork, with fantastic gables such as the Danes love to give their houses when they can afford to let their imagination take its fling in such a matter. East and south the town spreads from the red Cathedral walls. You may find some old houses among its streets, but scarcely as many as you would expect when you know that the Cathedral was founded by Harald Blaaland so long ago as 975. By the way, this monarch's frescoed portraiture is to be seen on one of the Cathedral choir walls. The Englishman is quick to notice that though he is not depicted as a very mighty man, he is styled "Rex Danie Anglie et Norwegie." Things have, however, changed a good deal during the thousand years since King Harald could claim so substantial a kingdom.

But I did not come to Roeskilde in summer. It was midwinter when I found my way to the "Hotel Prindsen." Traveling was distinctly tiresome. I had purposed arriving at Roeskilde at the decent hour of four or five in the afternoon—at least, so the time-tables promised me. That, however, was out of the question. I was west of the Belts when I set my face towards the cathedral city, and the Belts were frightfully congested—with ice. The consequence was this: instead of sending five or six ferry-boats daily across the fifteen miles of the Great Belt Channel, the railway companies had much ado to get the boats to cross once daily in each direction. We travellers amassed on each side of the

channel in various degrees of impatience, and even resentment. It seemed absurd that on the threshold of the twentieth century ice should be allowed to interfere with the mails. Yet interfere it did, very effectually. I for my part shall, for a good decade or two, remember the tussle the boat had with the floes and the vast reaches of solid ice which it behoved us to attack and crash through. There were times when it seemed impossible that we should succeed in our little enterprise. That was when we came to a dead standstill in the middle of the white field, and the engines for a while held their peace. It was a thick night at the time—black as the forebodings of the more nervous of the passengers. Every one of sense knew full well that any considerable pause in our struggle might prove fatal. It would give time for the ice to pack irresistibly about the boat, and freeze about it too. We did not therefore like these halts. They were worse than the constant orders of "Full speed astern," which were necessary to gain for us an adequate impulse after even a momentary check. Nor was the evident excitement of our captain and his henchmen calculated to compose us. However, all ended well, and we reached the eastern side of the Belt tolerably comforted.

This was at the hideous time of half an hour after midnight. My ticket to Roeskilde would, under these circumstances, bring me to the cathedral city at about half-past two in the morning. In effect it did so. I left the train, confabulated with the drowsy station-master, who assured me that the hotels were all fast asleep, reminded me of what I needed no reminder—to wit, that there were about thirty degrees of frost in the air—and suggested that I should journey on to Copenhagen and later return to Roeskilde.

This advice was sound. I spent the brief residue of the night in the capital, indulged myself with an hour or two of high entertainment among Thorvaldsen's matchless statuary, and came back to Roeskilde in the evening. To my joy, the head-waiter at the "Hotel Prindsen" talked excellent English.

It was uncommonly cold in Roeskilde that night. I primed myself for the endurance of it with a mixture of coffee and gin, which seemed to be in request among my neighbours in the café of the hotel. I do not recommend this beverage.

It may suit the Danes, but to the stranger it is scarcely nectar. Perhaps it does not really suit the Danes, for I remarked over my cigar that a very spruce, short, fat gentleman in a frock-coat, who was discussing the Schleswig Holstein question with a slim, angular young gentleman, grew almost intolerantly heated as he sipped at his cup. His interlocutor, who was satisfied with some mild lager beer, seemed to have much the better of the argument—and did not get red in the face.

Still, I repeat, it may be an aid to slumber and warmth, and therefore must not be vituperated. I was comfortable enough under my feather-bed—which the English-speaking waiter had arranged should be fully two feet longer than the average—and awoke refreshed, and—save the tip of my nose—divinely warm. The maid who came in to light the stove exclaimed something violent about “degrees” the moment she entered. I did not altogether understand her at the time. Later I learned from other mouths that the thermometer had made a phenomenal descent in the night, and obstinately refused to rise. I had an inkling of the state of things, however, when, looking from my bedroom window, I saw the Roeskilde boys and girls trotting to school with apple-red cheeks, holding their hands to their ears. This latter is a sure sign of unusual cold in Denmark.

It chanced to be market-day in the town. Sledge followed sledge up the street, with bales of animated clothing and furs in its midst. It was a pretty scene. The snow lay deep in the thoroughfares and on the roofs, and overhead the sky was a clear, pale, piercing blue. The blood-red colour of the Cathedral, early Gothic in style and of brick material, with its adjacent trees all heavily frosted, and the great white reach of the frozen fiord beyond, added to the pictorial beauty of the place. I had heard the Cathedral bells in the frosty night once, and their mellow harmony had excited expectation. This expectation did not, upon first actual acquaintance, seem justified. You do not look to see an aged church like this glowing with youthful fervour. Red-brick spires to us at home do not sound attractive. But of course the apparent anomaly was readily explainable. The Cathedral of Roeskilde has been profoundly restored. It has plenty of the dry bones of antiquity inside it. They are, however, alluringly dissembled under a

fair and fervid exterior. The Danes cannot be said to be a people very enthusiastic about religious matters or religious buildings. Their Lutheranism seems to make them not so much iconoclastic as indifferent. In no country in Europe, I suppose, have our modern, world-wide, evangelising revivalists such difficulties to face as they can hope to make an impression. This being so, some credit is due to Denmark for the sacrifice which has enabled the country to make Roeskilde, the national church, so presentable.

The snow lay in deep drifts against the red buttresses and the doors of the building. I walked round the exterior twice. My Kodak had designs upon its beauty. But the air was so keen and the wind from the fiord so penetrating that I could not satisfy myself in this particular; my fingers became instantly numb when I withdrew them from my pocket. I did, however, capture the towering facade, by sliding down a pretty lane at right angles to it, bordered with winsome birch villas and terminating in a holy well dedicated to an unfamiliar saint. This done, I called upon Mr. Deputy-Gravedigger Smith, as I had been instructed, and in his agreeable parlour—containing as many homely nick-nacks as a bazaar—arranged to be personally conducted about Denmark's Royal mausoleum. I have, here and there, clashed with guides innumerable. Mr. Deputy-Gravedigger Smith seems to me as much above them all as the Eiffel Tower is above the rest of Parisian edifices. I never hope to meet with a more gentle, graceful, courtly, and obliging old man. In my mind he will be ever associated with this Cathedral. Long may he live, apple-cheeked old septuagenarian that he is, to tell the tales about his Royal dead charges which he has so entirely at his finger ends.

The old gentleman was soon muffled in a comforter by his daughter, and, taking the keys, he led me into the Cathedral. Here he prattled unceasingly while he was with me in a quaint and not wholly intelligible mixture of Danish, English, and German. But he had such confidence in me—or perhaps wearied so much of my prolonged examination of the building—that four times he left me to myself and the Royal coffins in the Royal chapel. He made flying visits to his home and returned after each visit with an agreeable odour of strong drink about him. After each visit his volubility seemed increased, and the

anecdotes tripped off his tongue with a speed which was only bridled by the insufferable necessity of being as polyglot as possible.

The church is not large, but it is trim and bright, and in strong contrast to the massive character of so many of our British cathedrals. If it be comparable in its decorative work to any of our cathedrals, Ely may be mentioned as the one most suggestive of it. Ely, however, is infinitely more grandiose, not only in its architecture, but also in its colouring. Still, there is much that is winsome in Roeskilde's interior, and the gleam of the winter's sun, that cast a mosaic of variegated light on the pavement by the altar on this particular day, gave special grace to it. But it was very cold in the place. Old Smith did not unmuffle inside the church, nor even doff his hat. Even when leaning against the stately coffins of Denmark's dead monarchs, the old fellow showed little awe of them. He described them and their contents with the pride of a man expatiating about his orchids, and with something of the fondness also.

It is these tombs that make Roeskilde unique. There are three chief mortuary chapels, each containing a succession of monarchs and their wives. In the chancel are other monuments—that to the great Queen Margaret, who united the three realms of Scandinavia, being, of course, the most significant. This notable lady died in 1412, and was at first buried in the old Royal sepulchre church of Sorö. Roeskilde, however, claimed her a year later, and the Bishop supported his claim by seizing the Royal corpse, and taking it by force to his Cathedral. Close to the tomb is the singularly beautiful monument to her son Eric, who died prematurely. The lad is done in white marble, in knightly attire, recumbent on the flat headstone.

Beneath the choir is a grim, dark crypt containing a dozen or more coffins, great and small, sombrely wrapped for the most part in faded black velvet. "They come here," remarked my old custodian, "when they have nowhere else to go." Most of these desolate and compassionate dead belong to the last century—stillborn and young members of the reigning families. One does not like to think of them in this dusty cellar of death, lumbered together like a man's disused trunks and packing-cases.

To go hence into one of the three great mortuary chapels is like going from a young blighted rose-tree to a vase of

superb cut flowers. The most recent of the chapels is really the least interesting. Its Byzantine style and its speckless walls of whitewash do not harmonise with the rest of the Cathedral. The chapel contains about a century's growth of sovereigns and their queens in marble mausoleums, and standing nakedly in the glittering pomp of crimson velvet and silver. Here lies Frederick the Seventh, with a golden laurel-wreath on his coffin; and here may be seen the mementoes of affection sent but the other day by members of the reigning family to be placed over the remains of their loved ones, recently dead. Hither will come King Christian the Ninth and his Queen when their earthly career is over. It is impossible not to be reflective in a place like this. But dear old Deputy-Gravedigger Smith, with his soothing prattle and his kindly smile, seemed to take much of the sting from death itself as he laid his cleanly-wrinkled hand first on one coffin and then another, and told his tale. I should not like to say at how many of these more modern interments he had officially assisted.

The Chapel of the Three Kings adjacent is of a very different order. Here one can dispense with funereal moralising, for these dead have been so long dead that sympathy with them or their relatives is out of the question. The chapel walls are brilliantly frescoed, and the storied marbles they surround appeal to us as so many works of art. The tomb of Christian the Third in particular is a magnificent achievement. But one is most drawn to the simple brown slab in the floor upon which the words "Christian Rex" may be read, denoting the resting-place of the monarch who was great in more senses than one. He was, until his disinterment a decade or two ago, believed to have been of fabulous size. Old Smith has much to say on this subject. He was present at this interesting scene. The bones were certainly those of a very tall man, though perhaps scarcely answerable to the height given him by the marking on the pillar in the chapel—said to have been done by the King himself. It is curious to see how the existing members of the Royal family have also marked their heights on this famous pillar, though none of them approach the first Christian's eight-foot line. Peter the Great in his day came here and stood against the stone; but Peter again was some five inches shorter than Christian.

I really do not know how much of dear

old Smith's tales is strict truth, and how much is an unconscious and loving accretion to a nucleus of fact. But he astonished me with a story of a certain monstrous Irishman named Murphy, who, in 1864, stalked into the Cathedral, and hearing Mr. Smith's story of King Christian's height, exclaimed that King Christian was a child to him. So it seemed, upon measurement. There upon the pillar is Mr. Murphy's mark, a foot or so above Christian the First's line. Old Smith's amazement at this apparition of Mr. Murphy in 1864 had not lessened appreciably by 1893.

From the Chapel of the Three Kings to the Chapel of Christian the Fourth is another change of epochs, with a corresponding change in the garniture of the mortuary chamber. There is magnificence here—in the frescoes and the death-caskets—that recalls the gorgeousness of Versailles and Venice at their most florid epochs. Christian the Fourth was a notable monarch in war as well as in architecture. His sword is on his splendid metallic coffin, tight chained to it. His wife's coffin is on one side of him, and his eldest son keeps him company on the other side.

These are the chief treasures of Roeskilde. There are also a rainbow-hued organ, and gallery for the Royal family, dating from the sixteenth century, and a plain stone—ill-according with the gentleman's exuberance as an author in life—indicating where Saxo Grammaticus moulders in peace. Yet, stay; for its sly mirthfulness, the Chapel of Saint Bridget must not be overlooked. The ancient artist who frescoed it has portrayed a most diverting devil in pale green upon its walls. The fiend has long ears, and he is writing down in the register of his clients the names of those who come late to church or gossip therein—"scribo tardanus et vana loquenda vagantes." Beneath him is a long-haired lady, whose office it is, or, rather, was—in the fifteenth century—to punish such persons in this life also. She holds a stout birch of twigs in her hand.

I tarried in the Cathedral for two hours—long enough to exhaust even the Deputy-Gravedigger Smith's patience, had he not been supported by his runs home. Then it behoved me to hurry for the train to Copenhagen.

As I shook my dear old cicerone by the hand he said: "When you come again I shall be like them"—nodding at his kingly

clients. I hope it may not be so; for, interesting as Roeskilde Cathedral is in itself, it will be much less so without its amiable, apple-cheeked old custodian.

AN ANGEL UNAWARES.

A COMPLETE STORY.

MR. BARRADALE SMITH is a man—I beg his pardon, a notable man—of to-day. There can be no doubt about it, because when he proposed to publish in the "Dial" short autobiographies of "Notable Men of To-day," he started the series by writing his own. The second time the "Dial" appeared it contained the reminiscences of Mr. Anstruther Coates, and the third number—but, owing to a misunderstanding with the printer, I fancy there was no third number, or if there was, no notable could be persuaded to tell the story of his life therein.

Mr. Barradale Smith lives in a flat. A very nice flat it is, and a very nice rent he pays for it; but the exact situation of the building containing it cannot, for obvious reasons, be revealed. There are many Barradale Smiths in London; let them dispute in print as to which has the honour of furnishing the model for this sketch.

The flat itself is on the fourth floor. It contains, besides the usual living room, a spacious study sacred to the use of Mr. Barradale Smith, and a small den allotted to his wife, who is so far behind the times as to think that a woman who wants to live by her pen must needs spend the best part of the day in actually using it. Her husband has pointed out her mistake times without number. He tells her that she must let herself be seen more; that in these self-advertising days one must keep in the swim; that the name of Barradale Smith must be kept conspicuously before the public in all lists of those who help to bury, or marry, or even divorce a brother or sister celebrity, and that he himself cannot possibly be in two places at once. She only smiles, tells him to attend to his part of the business while she minds hers, and goes on with her writing, which is not turned into print over the name of Barradale Smith at all, but produces cheques almost as large, perhaps, as if it were.

Yet Barradale—how he blessed his sponsors for giving him that name!—is a really brilliant writer when he can be persuaded to write instead of thinking

about it. It is not very hard to persuade him either, if you set the example by writing a cheque yourself, but then he always wants the figure on that cheque to be so large in proportion to the amount of copy he will produce in return, that proprietors of cheque-books and journals often shake their heads and seek a humbler man.

The obvious remedy for such a state of things is to start a journal of your own, and Barradale has started many—so many, in fact, that printers and other base mechanics whose co-operation in the production of journals is a necessary evil, are accustomed to ask him for something in advance, which something is not always forthcoming. It was not forthcoming early in February of the present year, though Barradale had a brilliant idea—which it would be unfair to make public as it has not yet been worked out—for a weekly on entirely new lines.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, there being no function on to which his name would procure admission for himself, or at which his presence would ensure the insertion of his name in the papers, he was sitting in his study smoking and wondering where the capital to start the new venture could be found, when his maid-servant entered with a note.

"And please, sir," she said, "there's a man wants to see you."

"Did the man bring the note?" asked Barradale suspiciously.

There are certain men who want to see Barradale, perhaps because he is such a celebrity, whose curiosity he never gratifies if he can help it.

"No, sir," replied the girl. "He seems a respectable sort of man, sir."

Perhaps her opinion was biassed. The man had called her a pretty dear in tones quite sincere and inoffensive.

"But is he a gentleman, or what?" asked Barradale.

His temper was not good when he was worried, and he spoke snappishly.

"I'm sure I don't know, sir," replied the girl pertly. "I don't see enough gentlemen here to be a judge."

"Come, come, Mary," said Barradale soothingly—her wages were overdue, and she was a sharp young woman, who never mistook a lawyer's clerk for a printer's devil—"you know what I mean. Size him up, there's a good girl."

Barradale did not often drop into familiarity, but when he did, he swooped

down gracefully, and the girl was appeased.

"Well, sir," she said, "he's about fifty, or perhaps forty-five." She suddenly remembered the pretty dear, and took off five years. "Wears plaid trousers, a brown hovercoat, and a pot-hat. Might be a countryman up for an 'oliday. I think he's all right, sir."

"Then show him in, Mary," said Barradale, content to rely upon her judgment.

In that household the interests of master and servant are identical, Mary knowing that the more duns she keeps out the better is her own chance of coming in—for her wages.

The man entered, and Barradale, the still-unopened note in his hand, treated him to that stare of curiosity mingled with pity which he kept for people who were not "smart."

"Well, my man," he said languidly, "what can I do for you? I am really very busy, so please——"

"Oh, nothing much, thank you, Scissors," interrupted the visitor. "I was just passing, and thought I would look you up, that's all."

He tried to speak in a calm, matter-of-course tone; but if Barradale had been as observant as he usually was, he would have noticed that the man was suffering terribly from suppressed hilarity. Barradale, however, had not been called Scissors for thirty years, and the once-familiar nickname gave him such a shock that he noticed nothing with his bodily eye, though memory was busy in his brain, and, mentally, he saw old times again as plainly as if they had been yesterday.

"Why, you must be Paste," he almost gasped at last. He half rose from his chair, and was about, on the impulse of the moment, to welcome his visitor effusively, but when a man is in the swim, and is also such a comparatively feeble fish that he has to weigh carefully every word, and look, and action in order to keep his place, impulses should not be lightly yielded to, so he sat down again.

"Yes," said the other, "I'm Paste; good old stick-fast." He stopped, apparently expecting something that did not come.

"Ah!" said Barradale, resuming his usual languid manner. "The memory of those old days is very dim to me. We were young and foolish then. A nickname is apt to stick to one rather inconveniently, don't you think? Let me see; your real

name was Higgs, wasn't it? Mine is Barradale Smith. And what are you doing now, Mr.—er—Higgs? Not at the old place, surely?"

"Yes," replied the somewhat crest-fallen Mr. Higgs, "I'm there still, rubbing along in the old way. But you hadn't tacked on the Barradale in those days, and I had hard work to find you. Went about asking if any one knew where J. B. Smith, the 'Sun' Parliamentary reporter, hung out. At last I tumbled up against a friend of yours, and found you'd left the 'Sun' and the gallery too."

"Yes," drawled Barradale, smiling wearily as he wondered what was fame, and wished Mr. Higgs had been asking still. "I have left the 'Sun' a long way behind in the vale of years, and the gallery looms dimly at the vanishing point of my mental perspective, but I was christened Barradale, Mr. Higgs. I do remember that."

Mr. Higgs eyed Barradale curiously. Perhaps he thought there was something strange about a memory which could go so far back, and skip so much intermediate space.

"It's a pity you've forgotten the old 'Plympton Standard' days," he said drily. "We had some rare fun in the office now and again."

"Did we?" asked Barradale, sighing as if his weariness was almost unbearable. "I imagined that we slept most of the time, but then sleep was always considered the supremest bliss in Plympton, wasn't it? But may I ask why you have come to town, Mr. Higgs, and whether you have any special reason for honouring me with this call?"

"Well," replied Higgs, his shrewd eyes gleaming with the last sparks of expiring hope, or perhaps with the first of kindling anger, "I haven't had a real holiday for twenty years, and I thought I'd like to take a look round. Thought, too, you might find time to show me the lions and have a flare-up in our old pay-day spree style; but perhaps you're too busy."

If Mr. Higgs, who had climbed to that fourth floor—he had never noticed the lift—full of pleasant anticipations, thought that by reminding the friend of his youth of a pay-day spree he could thaw his icy reserve, he was doomed to disappointment.

"Unfortunately, yes," said Barradale, with difficulty suppressing all outward signs of an inward shudder at the idea of being seen with Mr. Higgs—on a pay-day

spree, too—at theatre or restaurant. "I am indeed very busy. What is more, Mr. Higgs, I am married."

"Yes, so your friend said," replied Higgs, curiosity and interest veiling for a time the light of anger in his eyes. "To Lesbia Lanthony, too. I should like to have seen her."

How Higgs, who was ignorant enough not to know that Jim Smith, of the "Sun," had developed into Barradale Smith of literature generally, came to be so glibly familiar with Mrs. Smith's pen-name was a mystery. Barradale's vanity was touched, and, at the risk of encouraging his visitor to prolong his stay, he endeavoured to solve that mystery.

"Yes," he said. "My wife will be sorry she has missed you; she is—er—out at present. You have heard of her, then?"

"Rather!" replied Mr. Higgs, with mortifying promptness and enthusiasm. "She's read as much as anybody down our way, is Lesbia. Strong domestic interest, yet nothing to make mothers uneasy. Abductions, but girls always rescued before scandal can get a word in edgeways. Kisses warm, but always scorch the right man; orange-blossoms and live happy ever after. You know."

Barradale did know, and had often urged his wife to try something less conventional. He sighed deeply, and wondered in how many years after his death the masses would acquire a truly cultivated taste.

"Of course," Higgs went on, "I had heard of you, too, but I didn't know you were you. You've changed your style since the Plympton days, and the Barradale led me wrong. You'll excuse me saying so, but you're too—too findy-dinky, don't they call it?—to really catch hold of readers. Readers, you see, are mostly young and hopeful—down our way, of course, I mean."

This was unbearable. Was he, Barradale Smith, to sit there and hear his inimitable style criticised by an ignorant clown, because in his rash youth he had been fool enough to associate with a dirty compositor? The man actually talked, too, as if he had some right to express an opinion. He might have been a publisher depreciating, in a business-like way, the value of that which he was about to buy, instead of being—what?—no doubt, a dirty compositor still.

How glad he was that he had not yielded to that momentary impulse! Had

he done so he could just imagine Higgs back at Plympton telling everybody to be sure and look up Smith when they went to town — Plymptonians usually came to town in batches, by excursion for seven, ten, or fourteen days—and Smith would see them through.

"Of course," he said coldly, but civilly — his struggles in the swim had at least taught him to keep his rage from boiling over—"I quite understand. But, really, Mr. Higgs, I am afraid you must excuse me. Work, you know, waits for no man, and I dare say you want to be off to the theatre or somewhere; best to be at the pit-door in good time. Stop one moment, though; I dare say I can help you a bit there. Where are you thinking of going to-night?"

"The Irreproachable," said Higgs. He, too, was full of rage, but, as he afterwards told a friend in Plympton, he wanted to see how far the cold-blooded beggar would go.

"Ah, yes!" ran on Barradale complacently. "A very good place too."

As he spoke he scribbled on the back of a visiting card:

"DEAR VINCENT,—Please find bearer a place in your upper circle, and oblige.—
Yours, BARRADALE SMITH."

"There," he continued, holding out the card between his finger and thumb, "hand that in at the box-office and it will be all right. So glad to have seen you. Good afternoon. Nothing more I can do for you, is there?"

Mr. Higgs had, unasked, taken a seat early in the interview. He rose, and planted his feet firmly on the carpet as one who meant to have his say before he moved.

"Yes, there is," he said, "you namby-pamby, white-livered writer of rubbish. You—you can give me that sovereign I lent you to pay your fare to London with, nearly thirty years ago, and you can keep your card for some one that won't be ashamed of the company of the name that's on it," and he flicked it contemptuously out of its owner's fingers.

To do Barradale justice he had forgotten all about that sovereign, which was only the last of a series of loans. The friends had shared and shared alike in what they called "spending brass," but, as the wages of the young compositor had been greater than the salary of the young

reporter, Higgs had had more brass to share. It was like him, of course, to remember such a trifle so long, but the mention of it at least gave Barradale a good excuse for taking a still loftier tone.

"There," he said, producing the required coin. "There you are, my good man, and now you have been paid, go; my time is valuable."

Higgs went without a word, and Barradale, giving a sigh of relief, sat for a few moments lost in thought. They had, he supposed, been rather intimate in the old days, and Higgs had done him many a good turn—yes, he admitted that—but then times change, and men with them. He had come to London and was a captain in the forefront of the literary battle; Higgs had stayed in Plympton and was still a camp-follower. Perhaps he had been rather too cool to him, and now that the man was gone he half regretted it—would have wholly regretted it but for the thought of those other Plymptonians, whom a cordial reception of Higgs might have brought in his wake.

"It would have been like relieving a tramp," he said to himself. "The poor beggar was perhaps hungry for sympathy, auld lang syne and all that sort of thing, but if he had got it he would have chalked the doorpost to a certainty. No, no; you were quite right, Barradale, my boy. It would never have done."

Then with another sigh he took up the note, which in the excitement of the interview he had neglected, opened it, read it, and rushed out of the room after Higgs.

"Mary! Mary!" he cried. "Has that gentleman gone?"

"Do you mean the man, sir?" asked Mary. "Yes, sir; he went down by the stairs swearing something awful."

"Run after him as quickly as you can, girl, and bring him back," gasped Barradale.

Mary went down by the lift and presently returned—alone.

"He's gone, sir," she said. "Clean gone. The porter said he tipped him a sovereign and told him to credit it to the humbug upstairs—meaning you, sir, I'm afraid—got into a hansom and told the man to drive to blazes. Is the poor gentleman out of his mind, sir?"

Mary was engaged to that porter, and, when she heard the episode of the sovereign, her sympathies went over to the visitor.

Barradale muttered something unintelli-

gible, returned to his study, and called angrily for his wife.

"What is the matter, James?" she asked placidly. "I wish you would try not to interrupt me before my time is up."

"Read that," he said, giving her the note, which ran thus:

"DEAR BARRADALE (alias Scissors)—I have caught the goose that lays the golden eggs and salted his tail with salt of savour strong enough to make a dead horse gallop. Which his mellifluous name is Higgs, and he claims to be an old pal of yours; also he admires your wife—that is her works—immensely.

"He is printer and proprietor of the 'Plympton Standard,' and half-a-dozen affiliated papers; president of the Great Northern Syndicate, and I don't know what all. Likes your idea, and is game to find any reasonable quantity of oil to make the 'wheels go round,' all because he says that when you were on the 'Standard' you had more brains than all the rest of the staff put together. Oh, what a staff it must have been, eh, dear boy? He says, also, that you have got into a bad style—seems to be a judge of what suits the B.P.—but that you can drop it if you like. Can you? The Higgs is romantic, and insists on paying you a surprise visit. He is a bit of a rough 'un, but full of enthusiasm. I send you these few lines to warn you against damping it.—Yours,

"T. ANSTRUTHER COATES."

"Oh, I am so glad, Jim," said his wife; Barradale could not induce her to drop the name under which he had wooed and won her long before he became notable. "There must be money in your idea, after all, if Mr. Higgs is going to take it up. They say he has no culture whatever, but is a first-rate judge of what will pay. As president of the syndicate he has sometimes written to me under my pen-name. I believe he thought I was a young girl. What an odd thing he should be an old friend of yours! You never told me. I wonder how long he will be? I must go and make myself presentable."

"You needn't trouble," said Barradale sardonically. "He's been. I hadn't read the note, and I quenched him. He

mentioned you, and your confounded sentimental stories too, and I thought it was like his infernal impudence. Why will you not take advice and let yourself be seen? If you had been in here I should have made such an ass of myself. Of course, when he asked for you I said you were out. How was I to know that such a lout was a purveyor of the stuff other louts imagine to be literature?"

Then he cursed, first his fate in general and then his friend Mr. Coates in particular for spinning his note out to such a length with foolery when, if he had been short, it might have been delivered before Higgs arrived. Then he collapsed in the silence of despair as he realised the probable result of the meeting between Higgs and Coates.

Coates wrote paragraphs—mostly little personal paragraphs—about notable men, and liked much to get hold of amusing anecdotes of their early days. Because he had spared his friend Barradale, partly because he knew nothing of his early days, and partly because they usually rowed in the same boat; but now, if this new scheme collapsed, they might be in separate interests, and the first line of Coates's note proved that his ignorance was not enlightened, to what extent Barradale he did not guess.

Whether these fears are groundless time alone can show—Coates has the habit of keeping back anything until his victim has done something more than usually remarkable, and Barradale has done nothing remarkable lately, but they are still so acute that, whether Higgs wants revenge or not, he will be

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CONTENTS.			
	PAGE		PAGE
THE COWARDICE OF COURAGE	1	THE PROPHET OF SAINTON	27
IN THE WIZARD'S PARLOUR	9	KIRKPATRICK'S CURSE	35
A GREETING. A POEM	18	SPRING. A POEM	44
PEARL	18	"BROWN'S PATENT".	44
		THE "THREE FISHES"	52

THE COWARDICE OF COURAGE.
By ESMÈ STUART.

CHAPTER I.

THE officers of the 500th, after having been stationed a few months at Wharton, determined to give a ball in the Town Hall which should eclipse all the balls ever given in that famous country town, eclipse even the dance given by the "girls of Wharton," which had been a very pretty affair, and which must have cost the poor chaperons a considerable sum of money. Captain Alan Fletcher had said the decorations were A 1 and the wine drinkable, and he was a great authority on both subjects. In strict privacy his fellow officers called him "Cocky," and between closed doors, "Cock-tail"; but in the mess-room he was "the Calf," which was merely a nickname of initials.

There were certain facts connected with the Calf which seriously disturbed the minds of a few of his friends, especially the mind of Leigh Balfour, who had once believed in Alan Fletcher. He was so brave, so dashing, and so handsome, that it was useless entering the lists with Fletcher if he bestowed marked attentions on a girl. This was not a common occurrence, however, for the Captain had more entrancing amusements than flirting; he said girls were too easily captivated. Major Orm—the Great Orm of the 500th—said that Fletcher had but to lay siege to a fortress and it capitulated.

Leigh Balfour was a good deal younger

than his former friend, and had but lately added Captain to his name. He had ceased to haunt the footsteps of his friend, and yet it was generally understood that Balfour did not easily give up those he cared about; usually, he would stick to them through thick and thin. But in this instance he found it wouldn't do. The Calf had such an influence over him that it was neck or nothing. For some time past it "hadn't done." Balfour said nothing, but quietly retired. It nearly broke his heart; but it had to be done, and Balfour was as brave as a lion and faced difficulties as a soldier should. Every one in the regiment respected this fair-haired young fellow; the Colonel had lately said so to Mrs. Adair, the mother of Lela.

It was hard that, just as Balfour had become intimate with the Adairs, the Calf should suddenly discover that Miss Adair was quite out of the common; but strangely enough he made this discovery immediately after the news, which somehow leaked out, that Miss Adair's cousin had died in Australia, and had made her his heir.

There was no doubt that Lela Adair was good-looking; but, as a body, the officers did not rave about her. She had no airs and graces; she was gentle; but her eyes, as true as they were blue, could look angry if her friends were abused. She was tall, well made, but not strong, and did not place herself on a pedestal—speaking metaphorically, of course—to be worshipped by the opposite sex; but, honestly, the officers liked the girls who were plumper and pinker and smiled more.

Balfour had recognised the treasure when she was poor, and he had fallen desperately in love with that special kind of love which trembles to be found out, but longs to declare itself, and which fears so much to offend that it reaches absurd heights of self-denial. Though Balfour had not allowed Lela to discover his passion, through some mistake he was found out by the all-seeing eyes of Quickett. In ordinary talk they called him "Tommy" or "Quicksands," both foreign names to him; but of course applicable, as the enlightened officers had given them to him and not his godfathers and godmothers, who, naturally, at that early period of his life, could have known nothing of his leading characteristics. The lynx-eyed man discovered and disclosed Leigh Balfour's secret, and immediately there was a chorus of questions from those who did not know the divinity. What was Miss Adair like? Divinely fair, of course. Was she the girl with the Australian cousin, and was Balfour strongly hit?

"I should think so," laughed Quicksands, enjoying Balfour's discomfiture; "nearly walked over me yesterday when I was going in and he was coming out, and, moreover, I saw him give a shilling to a beggar who was gnawing a crust of bread and some Stilton cheese, and who between the mouthfuls asked him for something to eat. No one, not in love, could have done such a green thing as that."

"Engaged?" asked Marriott, always laconic because his wife was a chatterbox.

Here Balfour fired up and used strong language. Of course he was not engaged, and he would not allow a lady's name to be bandied about in this fashion. Miss Adair was a connection of a connection of his—quite reason enough for going to see her, and so on. It was at this moment that the Calf, who had been leaning out of the window, smoking, put his head in and caught the last words.

"A girl and Balfour, or Balfour and a girl?"

This stung Balfour more than all the other remarks, and there were innumerable reasons for this feeling.

"Nothing of the sort. Miss Adair is too sensible to flirt with me or any one else."

"A girl who won't flirt!—and," sotto voce, "who has money. Introduce me," said the Calf.

Balfour did not answer for a moment.

He was going to say something which would considerably have widened the breach between them; but Quicksands saved him from this misfortune.

"I will, Fletcher. I know her—alightly."

"All right. Well, come this afternoon."

Poor Leigh Balfour! The iron entered into his soul at that moment. He did not need to be told that if Fletcher cared, if—— But there was just the chance that Lela might not be his "style." So Balfour went on going; he would not be beaten out of the field. This time, at least, he would stay on and see his defeat.

That was some time before the ball, and things had gone on from bad to worse for Balfour, but quite the contrary for Captain Alan Fletcher, from indifference to notice, from notice to admiration, from admiration to love.

It must be remembered that Balfour's brether officers called him coy, Quixotic, but they never doubted his courage—he had given many proofs of it; and further, he had moral courage, too, because, as Orm said in private, he had given up Fletcher;

"When, you know, his little failing grew apace. Fletcher was clever enough to live two lives. By the way, Balfour heard young Lord Staples had gone to the dogs; it was really all Cocktail's fault. But it's true that the fellow has a strange power of fascinating men and women—till they find him out. He'll most likely land his last fish"—i.e., Lela.

She was an only child, and lived alone with her mother. The story of the Australian cousin was quite true. Tom Fielder had no very near relations, and Lela's father had years ago, when he was hard up, lent him five pounds, so John Adair's daughter should have that five pounds back again, and a vast amount of interest with it.

"Oh, dear, Lela," said Mrs. Adair, when she read the lawyer's letter announcing the fortune, "now you are sure to be married for your money."

"Oh, no, mother, I think I know a good man when I see him," she had said, and had proved this wise remark by falling in love with Captain Fletcher. The Calf had noticed that Mrs. Adair was at first uneasy in his presence, so he had won her over before he laid siege to Lela's heart.

"Oh, mother," said Lela one day, "how long Captain Balfour stayed to-day! He is very nice, but I did want to get our Captain to ourselves."

"Captain Balfour seems very fond of you, Lela, and he is a very nice fellow, very; but do be careful, my dear child. Are you sure that——"

"I always tell you everything, little mother, so I may as well own that just now Captain Fletcher made me an offer, and then—praise me and kiss me—I was so prudent that I said I would give him an answer the night of the ball."

"You do love him?"

"Yes; that is if I know my own heart. He is so good, so gentle and kind, and he loves me so much."

"So does Captain Balfour, but he is too shy to say it."

"That is just as well—under the circumstances."

The night of the ball came at last, and for days before and after it was the subject of interesting conversation. The girls looked beautiful—like angels or fairies—(we say this because we have seen neither) but Lela Adair was the envied beauty; but she was conscious only of one man's admiration, and the slight flush of animation and joy added to her beauty. When Fletcher claimed the first dance, Balfour knew that Lela would marry him; he, Balfour, had no chance, but that was nothing compared to her happiness, and the woman who gave herself to the Calf had not the remotest chance of happiness. But what could Leigh Balfour do? He could not go up to Lela and tell her that she was making a mistake, he could not even tell her what he knew—that Fletcher had given Lela's name as security for his gambling debts, and that he had betted on her "yes" this evening. There are many things a man cannot do, and this was one of them.

Lela was all joy, and she was so light-hearted that she was ready to enjoy herself immensely, but she did not mean Captain Fletcher to give out at the ball that she had said "yes." So when he softly whispered words of love, and asked her for her answer, she smilingly said she would not tell him till the very last dance, and that she meant to be good to all her friends, and not only to dance with him, as he seemed to expect. She did enjoy herself heartily; she was just like a child, so ready to find pleasure in her path. But it so happened that the ball-room was somewhat over-heated, and Lela a little over-excited, and just as Leigh Balfour came to claim her for his dance, Lela Adair fainted right away. There was of course a fuss, a running for

every imaginable liquor, but Mrs. Adair cut short the commotion by saying that she would take Lela home, as their house was so near the Town Hall; and Lela, who soon recovered, made no objection.

At first Captain Fletcher was extremely annoyed. He had not had his "yes," but he had as good as got it; and feeling thus reassured on certain little money matters, he determined to cut the rest of the country maidens and country mammas, and to retire with a few special friends to a private room of the "Bush Hotel," which joined on to the Town Hall, and had a door of communication. Leigh Balfour happening to be disconsolately hanging about, became aware of this move, and knew well enough what the result would be. However, Lela was gone, and—he was not his brother officer's keeper. So he sauntered on to the portico of the Town Hall to get cool himself, bodily if not mentally.

Presently, when he was beginning to think that this wouldn't do, and that there were girls who expected partners, a carriage drove up, and who should step out of it but the Adairs, Lela looking as happy and as beautiful as ever.

"Mother, here is Captain Balfour; how fortunate! Perhaps you would like your dance now? I felt so perfectly well that, as I had promised Captain Fletcher the last dance, I did not wish to break my promise."

A sudden madness seized Leigh Balfour.

"Yes, this must be our dance, Miss Adair. Come into the cloak-room. Now I will find a nice seat for Mrs. Adair and come back for you. Supper is in another room to-night."

When he returned to Lela he placed her hand tenderly on his arm—he was not the least shy now—and walked hastily down a long corridor.

"I am so glad of this opportunity," he began hastily, his words falling like a hasty shower. "I made up my mind to ask you, to-night, if you could ever—love me. I mean, if you could ever put up with me, because of the love I have for you, because I worship you. I would die for you, Lela——" Lela could not stop him though she tried. "I must speak this evening. You must know what I have so long felt for you; what I would do for you. Yes, I must speak and you must hear me."

She fathomed then the depth of his secret; she unravelled the mystery of his

many visits, of his silence, of his words. She knew everything about him before he left off, and her heart ached for him. How she must unintentionally have hurt him; but how stupid he must have been not to have noticed about Captain Fletcher!

At last she got in a word.

"Oh, please, Captain Balfour, do leave off, you pain me. I thought of you almost as a brother. I—I am almost engaged to Captain Fletcher; but this is a secret at present, only I tell you, to-night."

"Oh, yes; of course," said Balfour, falling into his usual quiet state like the sudden calm after a storm. "I will keep your secret; forgive me. I knew I had no chance. But don't leave me; come to supper."

He was not really peaceful; he felt almost mad. He would save her in spite of herself. Lela hesitated, then, touched with extreme pity for him, she followed him.

"But is this the supper-room?" she asked as she saw her companion push back the swing-door of the hotel.

"There is a quieter room in here; come, you promised."

He hurried her forward, and then stopped suddenly in front of a door.

One could hear raised voices and laughter; then without ceremony Balfour flung open the door.

It was a strange sight which met the eyes of those within and those without that room. Within sat Captain Fletcher with flushed cheeks and unsteady hand, dealing out some cards; his three companions were even more strange in their manner and more dissipated-looking than himself, and one was unmistakeably drunk.

Lela recoiled in horror; but Balfour would not let her go as he said:

"Fletcher, are you ready to claim your dance with Miss Adair, or are you engaged?"

The result was electrical. It was like the sudden explosion of a bombshell, and Captain Fletcher was far enough gone not to be master of his language. He poured out a volley of imprecations against Balfour, and rising quickly, he staggered towards Lela. Then he saw by her face that the game was lost, and he muttered something about following Miss Adair to the ball-room. The door was shut, the scene was over. Leigh Balfour had done a plucky thing—he had saved her. But he knew, had known when the mad idea entered his head, how she would hate him for it, and he recoiled mentally from what she and others would think of him.

Lela said nothing; she even returned to the ball-room with him; went back to her mother, and was seen to be dancing with Captain Grant, who was so awfully sorry Fletcher had gone home; he would be furious to know he had missed dancing with Miss Adair again.

The ball was a brilliant success, the local papers said.

When Captain Fletcher returned to his rooms he found a note for him; how sent he did not enquire. It was short, and in Lela's handwriting:

"I promised you my answer to-night. It is 'No.'"

Though very hazy from the results of the evening carouse, Captain Fletcher took means to steady his mind and his hand. He knew all was up with him now; but he would have his revenge on Balfour and Lela. So he wrote these words:

"MY DARLING,—I am writing to say good-bye. As you give me up life is worthless to me. What you saw was a sudden madness. Can you doubt it? The crime is as bad in my eyes as in yours, and I must expiate this first and only fault, for it is one which makes me unworthy of you, unworthy to possess the sweetest angel on earth; but at least let me live in your remembrance. Bad as this one fall has made me, my honour remains, and is dear to me. Miserable and hopeless as I am, still, I rejoice that I am not Balfour—the man who betrayed his friend, and whose dishonourable conduct renders him unfit to associate with gentlemen. In life and death, yours, "ALAN."

He read over his letter and smiled. It was clever; it would not miss its mark. As for himself, the game was played out. He was ruined, disgraced. Anyhow, the disgrace should not be public on the morrow, for there should be no to-morrow.

CHAPTER II.

LEIGH BALFOUR'S rooms were below those of Alan Fletcher. The Wharton Barracks were not very well built, and you could hear footsteps above you, especially if the owner walked up and down for a long time, as Captain Fletcher did in the small hours after the ball. Balfour had come home after that scene too utterly wretched to undress or go to bed. He had saved her, he felt sure of that. Lela Adair could not touch pitch knowingly;

but she was so true and steadfast—would she ever forgive him or ever forget? The probability was that she would not.

How Fletcher tramped above! Even now Balfour had a wish to run upstairs and ask his forgiveness—as if he would get it! At last, wearied out, Leigh Balfour threw himself on his bed without undressing. He dozed off, but not for long; for all at once he was startled by the sound of a report. Balfour knew in a moment what it was, and, without waiting to light a candle, he rushed upstairs before any one else had stirred. He took three steps at a time till he reached the upper landing, and groped his way towards Fletcher's door. Before reaching it he called out:

"Fletcher, for Heaven's sake where are you?"

He heard a muttered oath, so he thought, and what sounded like: "I'll do for you, too, if you come in."

Balfour paused; all was dark. If he went in he did not doubt that Fletcher—doubtless mad with drink—would fire at him in the dark, too, and—and—— A crowd of thoughts surged up at that moment of time. Instead of rushing in, as was his first impulse to do, there came over him a moment of strange unexplainable fear. He, who had never previously quailed before anything, now turned and rushed down the stairs, calling out to some one at the bottom to go and fetch a doctor. The some one was Quicksands, who, in night attire and candle in hand, was asking what was the matter. In his haste he fell over a step, put out his light, shouting to Balfour to come to its rescue. Thus several moments were lost, and then a great flood of remorse filled poor Leigh Balfour's soul. All fear was drowned; it had been but momentary. What had he done? Funked it! Oh, the shame that filled his brave soul! Without waiting to pick up either Quicksands or his light, he turned and ran again upstairs. Now, however, he was frustrated; several men and officers had arrived with lights, some one else had opened the door, and several hands were raising the fallen man. Blood was flowing profusely; it should have been staunched before, thought Balfour at once; he ought to have done it. The doctor was soon on the spot after this; but Captain Fletcher never spoke again, and as Balfour bent over him he said to himself that he had been his murderer. The blood seemed to him to become a flood, to be rising quickly higher and

higher; and in another moment Leigh Balfour was taken away in a dead faint.

Of course this tragic end made a great sensation; but as far as possible all the details were hushed up. The episode at the ball leaked out; but the past sins of the dead officer were passed over for the sake of the relations and of "that poor girl." Balfour went away on sick leave. He and Lela did not meet again, and neither did she write to him, so, of course, he dared not write to her. He must be hateful in her eyes, and rightly so—if she knew! It was not the past he regretted; but it was that moment of cowardice that weighed so heavily on him. Suppose he had entered at once, he might have saved him; and if he had been shot dead, well, was life at this moment a gift to be highly prized?

Soon after this the regiment was ordered abroad, and Balfour went with it; but everybody said that since that affair of poor Fletcher's he was an altered man. Quicksands often remarked that it was ridiculous mourning for such a man as that. He believed it was that girl Balfour was hankering after. She ought to know, and if ever he had the chance—— That was certainly unlikely, for the Adairs had left Wharton and had buried themselves abroad.

The 500th was quartered at Gibraltar, and, after a time, the Rock seemed to them uncommonly small. They wanted to do something to enlarge it; but Nature was against them on one side and those dirty Spaniards on the other. There was plenty of fun to be had, but more room was badly wanted.

One day Grant's bride gave a party. She was new to the regiment and its traditions; but was already popular because she liked parties and never made love to Grant in public. She was fond of Balfour because he was ready to dance attendance on her, and make himself generally useful. He promised, too, to come to her party—a thing he rarely did nowadays. Quicksands was invited on condition he didn't make fun of it. There were some new arrivals expected, friends of Mrs. Grant.

The first person Quicksands saw was—Lela Adair, more beautiful than ever, but sadder, paler, almost like a ghost of her former self.

Quicksands did not hesitate a moment. He remembered his vow, and, walking right across to Miss Adair's corner, began at once.

"We are old friends, Miss Adair. How is Mrs. Adair? Is she here?"

"No; I am with friends. My mother is in Italy; she does not like the sea."

"Awfully nice place here—so gay; but too small. Mrs. Grant likes it. Do you remember Grant and—Wharton?"

Quicksands felt that he must make haste; Balfour might come in at any moment and spoil everything. He feared even that Miss Adair might refuse to talk to him, for her tone was freezing when she answered:

"Of course I do; but we shall never go back there."

"Well, no; I don't wonder."

Lela blushed and said in a low voice:

"It is scarcely kind of you to speak of—to recall that time. I did not know your regiment was stationed here, or I should not have come."

"Awfully glad you did; I wanted to tell you——"

"Please don't. I would rather not hear."

"You don't know what it is. Miss Adair, you were under a mistake, I think, about—poor Fletcher."

Lela turned crimson now. She rose from her seat and walked a few steps towards the door, but Quicksands followed her as she said:

"Excuse me, I would prefer——"

"Come into this little study; there is no one there"—the room was filling—"and it's only fair to Balfour. You don't know him, but I do. There isn't a man in a thousand who would have done what he did for you."

"I hope not; I know what he did. He—he—betrayed his friend." Lela gasped the words as if they hurt her throat. "Taking advantage of my ignorance, he dragged me to a room to see the shame of the man I loved—and who loved me so truly, I may say it now—the man who felt this first fall so bitterly that he could not live under that shame."

"I thought so," muttered Quicksands in despair.

"Yes, he could not bear his disgrace. He loved me so much, so much that he preferred death to dishonour, as if—well, of course it altered my feelings, but in time—in time, if he had lived—I might——"

"Good Heaven!" said Quicksands, for Lela was a revelation to him; he did not know that women could be so true to one idea.

"Yes, I might have forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself. He did

very, very wrong; but do you think, when every one has justice done to them, he will be condemned and his friend praised?"

"I'm sure of it," said Quicksands, almost bowled over, as he expressed it, by her eloquence.

"Then I differ from you; I know it will be the other way. A true friend should hide a first fault——"

"Do let me say one thing, Miss Adair, now do. Women ought to be fair as well as generous. You think you are generous, but you make a mistake. Look here, I know that I'm meddling, but I do like fairness, and I did wrong originally—I introduced you to Fletcher."

"That is why I am listening to you."

"You are wrong again; you ought to cut me for it, you really ought. I have had it on my conscience, which isn't usually over squeamish. I really didn't believe poor Fletcher would take to you, but you see you had that cur—— I beg your pardon, that fortune."

"As if that made the least difference to him."

"Oh, but it did! I dare say he liked you, and all that—we all did—but Fletcher couldn't really love a woman."

"Captain Quickett!"

"Well, it's true. How could I speak against the dead if it wasn't important to the living? Do you know that he was so deeply pledged—I mean that he had signed away such a heap of your money, that your refusal bowled him over?"

"My money!"

"Yes; he was mad on gambling, and it would soon have been too hot for him. You were his last card—though I don't expect you were his first one as well. Well, anyhow, you owe it to Balfour that you aren't now the most miserable woman in existence, you do indeed. Balfour was so awfully fond of you, he must have been to do that; and of course he guessed you'd never forgive him, that's the best part of it. Talk of heroes! If you don't believe me, Miss Adair, ask the Colonel what came out afterwards. Fletcher was so awfully clever, he could take in any body. He finished up Lord Staples—there wasn't much to finish, certainly, but Fletcher did it. I wouldn't mention it if——"

"Don't say any more, please," said Lela. She was deadly pale now.

"Well, I won't; but you see it was hard on Balfour."

At that moment Quickett saw Grant

looking in, so he gave Lela his arm, and returned to the company. Had he done any good?

Balfour was there, getting tea for the ladies. He did not see the pair come in, but after a time innocent Mrs. Grant drew him aside.

"You must be rewarded. I'll introduce you to some one I admire very much."

Before he had collected his thoughts he was bowing to somebody dressed in half-mourning, somebody who said at once:

"We already know each other, Mrs. Grant."

Lela held out her hand, and Balfour mechanically took it. He had not believed this event possible. They were in a bay-window which overlooked the sea, almost alone; whilst beyond them rose the loud hum of voices.

"I have just seen Captain Quickett," said Lela slowly; her fan trembled in her hand.

"He is not as lively as formerly—we have all changed." Was he dreaming?

"Yes," said Lela, glancing at his face. He looked years older and graver. "I have changed, too. I think I shall never feel young again."

How good Miss Adair was to speak to him! She must be doing it from a sense of duty; he would spare her.

"I feel sure I can only remind you of painful events. Mrs. Grant knows nothing of them, or she would have spared you an introduction."

"I am glad she did not." Did Balfour hear aright?

"Glad! You do not mean that?"

"Yes, I do, because to-day, only to-day, I have heard the truth."

Leigh Balfour felt as if that queer dizziness might come on again, as if he were going to re-enact that terrible scene again.

"The truth! Oh, no, you have never heard it."

"Yes, I have. Surely he was not cruel enough to deceive me. Why did no one tell me before? Even now I cannot take it in. I feel stunned; but it is better to know the truth, and to know what I owe you."

"Ah," said Balfour, "that is a terrible story; it should be left buried."

"No, no; though I feel stunned and miserable, yet I shall be happier in the future. Captain Balfour, forgive me!" and then lowering her voice she added: "You saved me from——"

He interrupted her: "How can I say, how can any one be sure? You might——"

"No, no, I see it all now—your devotion, your generous conduct. How could I have believed so much evil of you? All this time I felt so bitter because I thought you made him desperate, because you prevented his first fault from being hidden. I didn't know much about such things, but I knew that we women must be forgiving—we all must—and in time I felt that I would have forgiven him, and he would have blessed me for it. Then I thought that you had prevented all that, and that you had betrayed your friend because you were jealous. Now I know it was just the opposite, that because you loved him and wanted to save him from sinking lower you did that; you snatched me from the fire. I was so believing, I should have trusted him with everything, and then——" Lela shivered a little. "Oh, I won't judge him, I won't think of his wrong to me, but I must ask your forgiveness for my thoughts. You would have saved him, too, had you had the chance."

"I had the chance," murmured poor Balfour, but Lela could not understand him.

"I remember that night very well. I remember all you said. I was angry then."

"Say nothing more about it. You know the truth—part of it—say nothing more."

"But I must, I must, Captain Balfour. Do you remember how you asked me that night to be your wife? How you pleaded with me? I was deaf to it all then. I thought only of him, he was so good, so worthy, I thought; but I was all wrong. I should not have thought of him, but of you—you who deserve everything one can give."

She had placed her hand on his arm as she spoke, and he gazed at her as if he could not understand or hear her. Her sweet sympathetic face, full of tenderness and remorse, added to the unreality of the scene. He was dreaming, and this was some fiend's temptation; it must be, for her face was fading away, and a vision of red blood was taking its place.

"You will not forgive me? Don't look like that, Captain Balfour. If I ruined your life, think what I suffered, what we have both suffered, and let us make the best of our—broken lives. Long ago you asked me something; are you of the same mind now?"

"That is part of the punishment," he groaned. "I am; how can I change?"

"Oh, then, it is easy; don't talk of punishment. Heaven helping me, I will try and make you forget the past."

He shook off her hand impatiently.

"For Heaven's sake don't torture me, I can't bear it. I shall—no, I am ill, but I will not yield. Listen, Lela. I love you more, if possible, than before; but you shall not marry me—you shall not become the wife of a murderer."

Lela only replaced her hand.

"You believe it, I see, but it is not true. Don't you know that my money was his last chance? His blood is on his own head."

"No, on mine. I cannot let you think nobly of me. Listen; I am his murderer. I ought to be in prison now if justice were impartial. You had better have married a drunkard, a gambler, a man with no principles, than a murderer. Don't look so calm. I did it. I heard the shot and ran up; it was dark, quite dark. O Heaven! I was a coward. I feared he would be mad with drink, and would fire at me, and—I turned back. I went back afterwards with the others, but it was too late then. At first I might have staunched the blood, I might have lifted him, and he might have lived. Yes, I turned back; I who had never before turned my back on a foe, I did it then. There, Lela, I could not abase myself more than by telling you. I have never told any one else, but I have done it now. Good-bye, and forget us all—forget me especially."

CHAPTER III.

FOR some days after this Balfour went about in a queer kind of state, and then gave in. "Climate and the old attack," the doctor said. Below the ever-present pain, however, was a new feeling, almost calming. He had been in purgatory, but he had avenged Alan. Then again came times of almost frenzy at the thought of Lela and what he had refused. How good and true she was, how she had been staunch to Alan as long as possible, and then she had turned to him! But he had not allowed Heaven's most perfect creation to give herself to a—a—"I told her, I used that word, I am sure of it, and she went away without another word. She was right and noble as ever; she would not pain me by words, but she knew I was right."

In spite of this he found out all that Lela had done, how she had gone sooner than she had intended and that instead

of going to Italy she had gone to England with some other friends. It did not matter where; she was gone, she had acquiesced in his renunciation. She was gone, and he must struggle on through the rest of his life as bravely as he could. He lived on this high table-land of thought for some time, and then broke down utterly, and the doctor said that he must be shipped back home at once. Quicksands was deeply disappointed at the failure of his plan; it was failure, but how or wherefore he could not tell. He believed it was still "that affair," and soon he should believe in ghosts.

"That girl"—meaning Miss Adair—"is too high and mighty for me. Give me one of the little girls that will forgive and forget, kiss and make up. That's the girl for me, not one like Miss Adair. Her heart's all made up of pride."

The little officer did not say this in Balfour's hearing, but on the day he left for England to go to the aunt who had brought him up, and who was, as she expressed it, "another mother to him." Quicksands, who had once seen her, said that he preferred having but one mother and not replacing her.

The regiment still basked at Gibraltar, and still told the same tales over their mess and their cigars. Quicksands had added a version of Miss Adair's conversation with him, but it was hardly recognisable.

Some three weeks after Lela's departure, and a week after Balfour's disappearance, Quicksands, lounging near the landing-place, amused himself by watching a small boat being rowed in from the "Britannia," a process satisfactory to no one except the boatmen who received the fees.

"By George, those ladies will get a wetting!"

Then, as they neared, he started forward.

"Miss Adair, I declare." In the presence of ladies Quicksands tried to remember that an affirmation suited his or their conscience better than an oath. "You have come back to the old Rock, then?"

"Only for a few days. Miss Henton, my friend, has never seen it. We are going to an hotel in the town. Thank you, I am not too wet. How is Captain Balfour?"

"Oh, awfully seedy! Gone—invalided home. This time he is hit and won't get over it."

Lela flushed.

"Gone home ill?"

"Yes, awfully ill."

He put it on strong.

"I think we shall go home by the next steamer; a short time suffices to see the Rock, doesn't it, Captain Quickett? By the way, what is Captain Balfour's address? You will know; you were so good to him."

"More than you were," thought Quicksands, supplying the information, and adding:

"But he won't see any one, and his aunt is a virago!"

That was all that passed; but she went away quickly, and left Gibraltar the next day. Quicksands told the mess that she couldn't stand the Rock more than a day and a night, and he added:

"It looked as if she meant something this time; but it's too late. Women always come in after the finish, when it's no more earthly use. I'll write to Balfour, though, to tell him the beginning and to ask him to tell me the end."

"Leigh, do rouse yourself and take this mixture; it's my own making; and if you took it you would look less ill and lose your headaches."

Miss Balfour said this sternly. Leigh roused himself, and even smiled.

"I took it yesterday, but I'm no better."

"You have been home a month. If you had taken it every day I should see some improvement."

"There won't be any," muttered Leigh.

His aunt retired offended with his obstinacy. Presently she came back, with a look of horror on her face.

"My dear Leigh, there is a young woman in the drawing-room."

"Well, what does she want?"

"She wants to see you."

"Oh, I can't be bothered. I see no one."

"That's what I told her; but she won't go away."

"You can manage to send her away, I'm sure."

"It's your wish?"

"Of course. Who is she? I want to see no one."

His aunt retired again.

There were voices in the hall, and Leigh heard a tone which suddenly moved him. He sat up.

"Impossible!" he murmured; but his head and hands grew burning hot at the bare idea.

"Excuse me, Miss Balfour, but I must."

The door was opened, and Lela herself

was there; and Leigh's heart seemed to stop beating; but at least, if he must die, he had seen her again. But what was she saying?

"Captain Balfour, Leigh—I have been to Gibraltar for you, and you were gone, so I have come back here. Mother wants me back in Italy, and I must not stay long. I must go back as soon as possible, but I am here to tell you."

"Tell me what?"

"That it is all right; you are not a——" She could not say the word.

"And, please, Leigh, if you were—I—I would still be your wife. It was not in intention; but all the same I knew you would never marry me if you thought so, and I went to England to find that doctor, the doctor who attended him, and he says nothing, nothing—do you hear, Leigh?—nothing would have saved him, even if you had been in the room. It did not alter anything really; and now, oh, I am so hungry! May I have something to eat before I go back to Italy. And before then, please"—

"Well!" murmured Miss Balfour, lifting up her hands in horror—"we must be married. Mother knows everything, and you must get stronger out there in the beautiful sunshine."

"Oh, those terrible modern women!" thought Miss Balfour. "Fancy! the forwardness of making poor Leigh an offer on his death-bed! I have always heard of them; but I have never seen one before." Aloud she said sternly: "Say 'No,' Leigh. I cannot believe my ears; and remember, you have to prepare for another journey."

"He had better take this one first," said Lela, half laughing, half crying, because Leigh had taken her hand and did not loose it. "Leigh, say 'Yes,'"

Leigh raised her hand slowly to his lips.

"My darling, my darling! what is that about 'passing the love of woman'? It is a mistake. You did all that—and for me?"

"Yes, all that—and for you."

"Yes," said Leigh Balfour.

IN THE WIZARD'S PARLOUR.

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

ON a certain bright but chilly spring afternoon, when the present century was many years younger than it is now, one traveller, and one only, alighted from the

four o'clock train at the little station of Brunton-le-Willows. He was a man of almost herculean build, being at once tall and broad-shouldered, and was apparently between thirty and forty years of age. The lower part of his face was hidden by a long, bushy black beard and moustache, but what could be seen of it had been tanned to a dark reddish brown by long exposure to sun and wind. He had a well-shaped, prominent nose, as became a man of his generous proportions, and black eyes, very bright and penetrating. His outer garment was a long overcoat heavily furred at the collar and cuffs, under which he wore a suit of dark well-fitting tweeds. His muscular throat was encircled by a broad turned-down collar fastened with a diamond solitaire, and a loosely-tied crimson kerchief with flowing ends. On his head he wore a broad-brimmed soft felt hat which would take any shape its wearer chose—a style of headgear much more uncommon in England in those days than it is now. The traveller's sole luggage was a brown leather portmanteau marked with the initials "E. W."

Twelve years had gone by since "Ted" Wilding, from the back seat of the Highflyer coach which was bearing him Londonwards, had seen the tower of St. Mary's fade and sink in the distance, and had breathed his last mental farewell to all he left behind him. He had quitted home a raw and ignorant, but wilful and headstrong youth of nineteen; he came back to-day, a man of thirty-one, widely experienced in certain phases of life, with all his faculties sharpened by contact with a world which has no mercy for the weak or incompetent; sobered to some extent by all he had gone through, but with volcanic passions still existent below a somewhat impassive exterior, and only kept under by the force of an iron will.

Wilding's father had been a country doctor, widely known and respected, the whole of whose life, from the day he bought old Dr. Benwood's practice to that of his death while still a comparatively young man, had been passed at Brunton-le-Willows. He had left behind him a widow and two children, the younger of the two being at the time of her father's death a girl of eight, and her brother's junior by nine years. Two years later Ted Wilding, who had always been a masterful boy bent on elbowing his way through the world after his own fashion, had persuaded his mother to sell out a

hundred pounds' worth of the stocks bequeathed her by her husband, and with the proceeds in his pocket had departed to carve a fortune for himself in that new world beyond the sea about which such wonderful tales had penetrated even to secluded Brunton-le-Willows. For those were the days of the Californian gold craze. That, as already stated, had happened a dozen years ago. More fortunate than the great majority of those who went out then and later, after many adventures and many ups and downs, Wilding had succeeded in accumulating a considerable pile of dollars, and with his banker's receipt for this in his pocket he had now found his way back to the home of his youth.

As he strode along with the free, swinging gait of one to whom a city's crowded ways would have been intolerable, many memories, some sad, some humorous, mixed with others which even through his tan brought a blush to his cheeks, were tugging at his heart-strings.

Wilding's resolve was, without making himself known to any one, to go direct to his mother's house. For three years no tidings from home had reached him; but that was hardly to be wondered at, so erratic had been his movements, so devils had been his ways. Without having any cause for uneasiness beyond such as had its origin in a lengthened lack of tidings from home, Wilding was yet a prey to a certain anxiety which he was unable wholly to repress. Before turning out of the main street into the quiet side street in which his mother's house was situated, he passed for a few seconds, staring into a shop-window meanwhile. Then he drew a couple of deep breaths and went quickly round the corner, but only to slacken his pace to a saunter as he drew near number twenty-four. His eyes were fixed on one of the windows, at which, while he was still several doors away, he had caught a glimpse of a woman's face. Was it Fan's—it was too young to be his mother's—or was it a stranger's? A moment later his doubt was solved. It was a stranger, whose eyes met his point-blank. A momentary spasm contracted his heart, and then his gaze dropped from the girl's face to the brass plate on the door, where his father's name had shone conspicuous for so many years. It now bore a name that was wholly unfamiliar to him. That the home of his youth was now the home of others he could no longer doubt. But, in that case, what had become of his mother and Fan?

Presently, without being conscious how he had come there, Wilding found himself on the quaint century-old bridge which to this day spans the little River Weem. Pausing at one of the recesses, with folded arms resting on the parapet, he stood and gazed into the clear depths below. Scores of times had he done the same thing when a lanky youth, chafing against the restrictions of his narrow life, and, as it were, beating his wings against the bars of home. Now, as it seemed, he had no home to come back to.

After a minute or two he gave himself an impatient shake, as some big St. Bernard might have done. "What an idiot I must be to bother myself in this way about nothing!" he exclaimed. "I am always thinking of Fan as the little girl in short frocks and pinafores I left behind me. It seems hard to realise that she must now be a woman of two-and-twenty, and yet that is the undoubted fact. Of course, she's married by this time. Such a pretty girl as she promised to develop into would never want for offers, even in Brunton-le-Willows. And, of course, the mother's gone to live with her. In any case, whether they are still located in the town, or whether they have gone to live elsewhere, I don't suppose I shall have much difficulty in tracing them."

Wilding had reached the age of thirty-one without having ever been in love. Many faces he had seen in the course of his wanderings, which for a brief while had taken his fancy captive, but, one after another, he had forgotten them all. Thus it had come to pass that the image of the sweet-faced, hazel-eyed little sister whom he had left at home in England, and of whom he had been almost passionately fond, had never been displaced in his heart by that of any one else; and when, finally, his "luck" had taken a turn, and the amount in dollars standing to his credit in the bank agent's ledger had gradually increased, he had indulged himself in many a happy day-dream of what he would do for Fan, and of the "good time" they would have together after his return to the old country.

He was still leaning over the parapet and gazing into the pellucid depths below, when the sound of approaching footsteps caused him to turn his head. "Tom Urswick, by all that's wonderful!" he cried under his breath. "Dear old Tom, who used to be my particular chum! Will he recognise me?" But with a casual

glance at him the other went unhesitatingly on his way. "No, he doesn't know me from Adam. Well, I must indeed be changed," added Wilding with a sigh. "But it won't do to let him go. He's the very man to tell me all I want to know."

A couple of minutes later the two men were gripping hands. Over the hearty greeting that ensued between them we need not linger. Presently Wilding's face clouded. Laying a hand on his old chum's shoulder, he said in a changed voice:

"Tom, I came through Whitwell Street just now and past the old house. I saw a strange face at the window, and there's a strange name on the door. What does it mean? What has happened? What has become of my mother and Fan?"

Urswick turned a scared face on him.

"Great Heaven, Wilding! do you not know? Have you not heard?"

"I have heard nothing. For three years not a scrap of home news has reached me."

"Then sorry am I that it has fallen to my lot to have to tell you. Ted, my poor boy, your mother and sister are no more."

"Dead—both dead?"

"Both."

Wilding's left hand went up to his heart; he reeled back a step or two and caught at the parapet with his right. Urswick turned aside with bowed head.

There was a space of silence broken only by the low musical fret of the river against the mossy buttresses of the bridge.

"Urswick, this is terrible," said Wilding at length, with something between a groan and a sob. "I should hardly have been surprised to hear of my mother's death (her heart had been affected for years), but my sister, my pretty Fan, who was to me the dearest thing in all the world! Oh, Tom—Tom—say that you have only been trying to frighten me—say that it is not true!"

"Would to heaven that it were not true! No sweeter creature than your sister ever breathed, and somebody will have to pay a bitter reckoning one day—if not in this world, then in the next!"

Wilding gripped his friend by the arm in a way which caused the other to wince.

"A reckoning, did you say? You have something to tell me—a reckoning, Tom?"

"Yes, I have something to tell you, and a shocking story it is," replied Urswick in

low, grave tones. "But we cannot talk here. My house is only a couple of hundred yards farther on. Come with me, and I will tell you there all I know—all that is ever likely to be known of your poor sister's unhappy end."

A few minutes later they were seated opposite each other in Urswick's cosy snugger. The story the latter had to tell must here be set down as briefly as may be.

At the time to which this narrative dates back, the map of England showed no such network or tangle of railways as it does at the present day. The great trunk lines had all been constructed, but there were still a large number of secondary lines, extensions and connecting links in process of being made, or looming in the near future. One such branch line, which had only lately been completed, was that which took in Brunton-le-Willowson its way to a much more important town, twenty miles away. The construction of a portion of the line in question had been entrusted to that eminent contractor, Mr. Matthew Tamplin, who, as was customary with him in such cases, appointed one of his numerous sons, all of whom he had brought up to his own profession, to the post of chief superintendent of works.

In the course of time the progress of the works necessitated Neil Tamplin making Brunton-le-Willows his head-quarters. He was not long before he picked out Fanny Wilding as being the prettiest girl in the little town, and he at once fell in love with her after his fickle, half-hearted fashion, which would have mattered little or nothing had it not unfortunately happened that Fanny also fell in love with him. In what way they had first become acquainted was a point best known to themselves. In any case, it would seem that they met frequently in secret, more than one person afterwards testifying to having met them walking together by moonlight on one or other of the quiet country roads. To what extent Mrs. Wilding was cognisant of the affair was merely a matter for surmise; in that respect the truth was never known.

When Neil Tamplin had been about four months at Brunton he was called away by his father, who, so it was reported, sent him to superintend the construction of a more important line in the far north of England; but, however that may have been, he was never seen in the little town again. Three months after his departure

Fanny Wilding's body was found in the lower mill-pool. In her purse was a scrap of paper on which she had written: "He promised solemnly to make me his wife. He now scorns me and refuses to fulfil his promise. My shame is greater than I can any longer bear, so I bid farewell to life, trusting to Heaven's mercy that my sin will be forgiven me." The shock of Fanny's death proved fatal to Mrs. Wilding. Mother and daughter were buried on the same day and in the same grave.

All this had happened more than a year before Wilding's return.

Some hours had gone by since Urswick had brought his narrative to a close, and the April moon was riding high in the heavens when two men might have been seen standing with bared heads on either side of a lowly green mound. Wilding had been conducted by his friend to the grave of his mother and sister. For a little space neither of them had spoken. Wilding's broad chest was rising and falling with the emotion he was doing his utmost to suppress. A sombre fire burnt in his eyes, which were dry and tearless. At length, drawing himself up to his fullest height, with his right hand solemnly uplifted, and in a voice whose accents of low, concentrated intensity carried to his listener's heart the conviction that nothing would have power to turn him from the course he had determined on, he said:

"It is his life or mine, Urswick—his life or mine. I swear it over my sister's grave!"

CHAPTER II.

It was a few weeks later when Edgar Wilding took up his quarters at the "Spotted Dog," the one tolerable inn in the obscure hamlet of Crossdyke, buried among the Yorkshire hills and moors. He gave the name of "Evan Woodruffe," and the ostensible object of his sojourn in such an out-of-the-world spot was made patent by the quantity of fishing tackle he had brought with him.

The same modest hostelry was for the time being the head-quarters of Mr. Neil Tamplin, who just then was engaged in superintending the construction of a section of the Whinborough and Langaide Extension Railway. Wilding had employed a private detective to track down Tamplin, a task which had proved of easy accomplishment.

To Tamplin the advent of Woodruffe—so to call him—seemed like a veritable

godsend, for hitherto he had not lighted on a single creature in the place with whom he cared to associate; and he had been under the necessity of spending his evenings in a dreary loneliness, which had at times become all but unbearable, and had driven him to seek a temporary refuge in the bottle.

It was an essential feature of the game Woodruffe had set himself to play that he should ingratiate himself with Tamplin, and this, under the circumstances, he found no difficulty in doing; rather, indeed, was he welcomed by the latter, so to speak, with open arms. Tamplin had no longer any cause for complaining that his evenings were dull. In this stranger from over the sea he found the most delightful companion it had ever been his good fortune to come across, for the latter had a fund of stories and witticisms, interspersed with narratives of personal adventure, which seemed inexhaustible. The two men soon got into the way of dining together after Tamplin's work for the day was over, and they rarely separated before midnight. Tamplin, who prided himself on his skill with the cue, did not fail to proclaim aloud his disgust that there was not a single billiard-table in the "whole dog-hole of a place." But no place is too remote for cards; indeed, the contractor's son made a point of carrying two or three packs in his portmanteau, and so long as he could find some one to play with him who was neither a boor nor a nincompoop, he had always a refuge against the boredom of his own thoughts, which, as a rule, he found anything but pleasant company.

And Mr. Evan Woodruffe proved to be not merely an adept in every game with which he was acquainted, but one who could teach him several others, some of which he, Tamplin, had hitherto known only by name, while of the rest he had never so much as heard. It was a kind of knowledge which he was eager to acquire, so Woodruffe good-naturedly devoted a couple of hours on most evenings to initiating him in the mysteries of poker and euchre, and other less known games of skill and chance indigenous to that great continent from which he had so lately arrived.

On one point, Tamplin, in whom the gambling instinct was strongly developed, was inclined to grumble somewhat. Woodruffe would never play for anything more than nominal stakes, not, even when they engaged in friendly rivalry over one of those games in which Tamplin regarded

himself as the other's equal, if not his superior.

Tamplin, in his more unguarded moments, that is to say, when he had partaken of too much brandy, confided to his new-found friend how the "old man," meaning his father, "kept his nose to the grindstone;" how he had "paid the piper" so often for his son that he utterly refused to do so any more; how his allowance was little more than a foreman's wages, and how at that very moment he was "cornered" for want of a couple of hundred pounds, and for the life of him, didn't know which way to turn.

There was one feature about Tamplin which saved Woodruffe the necessity of having to draw on his inventive powers. He never betrayed any inquisitiveness with regard to his new friend's antecedents or family history. He had already gathered that Woodruffe had emigrated to the States when little more than a child, and he sought to know no more.

Often, as they sat opposite each other of an evening, Woodruffe's lips would inaudibly form the words: "His life or mine. I have sworn it." More than once Tamplin, looking up suddenly, intercepted in the eyes of the other a look so darkly sinister, so remorselessly cruel, that for the moment it thrilled him with a nameless dread of he knew not what. A second later it was gone, replaced by an expression of brimming good-humour, and Woodruffe was again the laughing, jovial, yarn-spinning companion whom he was learning to like so well. Then would Tamplin shut his eyes tight for a moment and growl to himself: "I suppose I shall be fancying I 'see snakes' next. It's all the fault of this infernal brandy. It's not fit for a pig to drink."

On a certain evening, when Woodruffe had been about a month at Crossdyke, as the two sat smoking together after dinner, he said to Tamplin, at the same time pushing a sheet of paper across the table:

"Look at this, and tell me what you make of it."

The other took the paper, nearly the whole of one side of which was covered with a sequence of letters, large and small, to all appearance in no sort of order, and certainly, as they stood, not forming any combination of words capable of being read by Tamplin.

"I can make neither head nor tail of it," he said presently. "To me it looks utter

rigmarole and rot. I suppose there's a catch of some sort in it, ain't there?"

"Not that I know of. I take it to be a cryptogram; that is to say, while apparently nothing more than a meaningless jumble of letters, if I am right in my surmise a very real meaning is wrapt up in it. I came by it in rather a curious way, as you shall hear when I have charged my pipe."

"You must know, then," he presently resumed, "that while on my way back this afternoon from fishing I was caught by a drenching thunder shower. There being a cottage handy, I saw no reason why I should not take shelter till the shower was over. While I was waiting my eyes were attracted by a very old book on a shelf, indeed the only book to be seen in the place. It proved to be a black-letter Bible nearly three hundred years old. In answer to my questions the cottager told me that it had belonged to his grandfather, and might have come down to the latter from his grandfather, for aught he knew to the contrary. With that he opened a drawer and took out of it a folded sheet of parchment yellow with age, which, on being spread open, proved to have written on it the original rigmarole of letters of which I showed you a copy just now. The old man gave me to understand that the Bible had at one time had two covers, one stitched loosely over the other; that by some means the outer one had become detached; that he had then discovered the parchment, the space between the two covers having evidently been hit upon by its unknown writer as a safe hiding-place. The owner of it looked upon the writing as nothing more than a charm, or cabalistic formula of some kind; but to me there seemed a possibility that it might mean very much more than that. Hence my reason for copying it, which the old fellow made not the slightest objection to my doing."

"But you don't expect me to believe that you hope to be able to make any sense out of that rubbish," said Tamplin scoffingly.

"That is precisely the object I have in view. Whatever hidden meaning it may have—and that it has one I am pretty certain—I am going to make it my business to elucidate. Years ago I used to be rather clever at deciphering the cryptograms which are often to be found in newspapers, and many an hour, when I had nothing better to do, did I devote to mastering them; and I may add that there was only one here and there which set me

at defiance. All things of this kind have a key, and when once you have lighted on that the rest is easy."

"Well, it's a sort of job that may come easy to you," said the other; "but I feel sure that if I were to try from now till doomsday I could never make head or tail of it."

A couple of evenings later, Woodruff's first words, when he and Tamplin met, were:

"Well, I've succeeded in translating the cryptogram, though I found it rather a hard nut to crack. Here's what I make of it, and when you have read it, I think you will agree with me that my time and trouble have not been wasted."

The paper Woodruffe gave the other to read purported to be a statement drawn up by the steward of a certain Sir Michael Falshaw, who, when his master was compelled to take hurriedly to flight, in consequence of being implicated in the Jacobite risings of 1745, had a box of family plate entrusted to him to conceal till better days should come. The statement went on to describe the spot where the box was hidden, which was "in the floor of the farthest opening, where is the pool of fathomless water, in the cavern yclept 'The Silver Lady.' There, on one of the walls, is carved a large cross, thirty feet from which, in a line running due north, is buried the oaken box, clamped with iron, containing a portion of the plate and many of the family jewels belonging to my honoured master."

"Well, of all the rummy starts I ever heard tell of, this licks the lot," said Tamplin, when he had read the paper. "Are you sure it isn't a sell? Do you believe that any such box was ever buried in the cave?"

"That it's not a sell, as you call it, I feel firmly convinced, and that such a box was buried there I fully believe. Moreover, I think the chances are that it has never been dug up, but that it has lain there to the present day."

Tamplin could only stare at Woodruff with wide-open eyes.

"I have been at the pains to make a few enquiries in the neighbourhood," resumed the latter, "and, as far as I can learn, Sir Michael Falshaw fled to France and died there; further, his estates were confiscated, and no one of his name or lineage is now known to be living in these parts."

"Then what do you intend doing in the

matter?" queried Tamplin, whose powers of speech had now come back to him.

"What I intend is, that you and I together shall thoroughly investigate the affair; that is to say, satisfy ourselves whether the box is, or is not, still buried in the Silver Lady Cavern."

"And should we find that it is, what then?"

"In that case we will divide the spoil fairly between us. Who will have more right to it than you and I?"

CHAPTER III.

THOSE people who are acquainted with that part of the North of England in which Crossdyke is situated, will probably be aware of the existence of the remarkable cavern mentioned in the cryptogram under the name it is known by among the country people, although the scientists and guide-books of late years have dubbed it by another and altogether more prosaic title. During the summer months people come from far and near to explore its wonders.

The entrance is, or was in those days, closed by a rude door, which was kept locked when no visitors were being conducted over it. In a cottage near by lived the custodian, or guide, who had charge of the key, and unaccompanied by whom no visitors were permitted to enter the cave. At the period of our narrative the office of guide was filled by one Tony Rudd, a young man of twenty, a hunchback, and otherwise deformed, who lived with his widowed mother in the aforesaid cottage.

Woodruffe had already explored the Silver Lady, but Tamplin did not know that, and the other had his own reasons for not mentioning the fact.

The cupidity of the contractor's son had been intensely excited by Woodruffe's strange discovery and the latter's promise to share with him the contents of the box, should it prove to be still in the spot where it had been buried upwards of a century before. During the few days which elapsed before they began their search, he could talk of little else when they were together, and his dreams were about the same subject. He never paused to ask why his new friend should have offered to divide the contents of the box, when—assuming the treasure to be still there—he might just as easily have secured the whole of it for himself. The very excess of his greed left

no room for suspicion in his mind. In telling Woodruffe that he was "cornered" for want of two hundred pounds, he had spoken no more than the truth. His promissory note for that amount would fall due in six weeks, and, till a few days ago, he had known no more than the man in the moon whence or how to obtain the cash to meet it. Now, however, a golden vision danced day and night before his eyes.

Woodruffe had waited purposely for a rainy day, when visitors to the cavern would be at a discount, and he and Tamplin could almost make sure of having it to themselves. It was about four o'clock on a certain stormy afternoon when they set out together from the "Spotted Dog," each wearing a travelling cap, and shielded from the weather in his mackintosh. After getting clear of the village a rough, uphill walk of half a mile brought them to the cottage where lived Tony Rudd. While they were still some distance away they could hear the long-drawn, wailing notes of the hunchback's fiddle. Tony stared a little at the notion of any one wanting to explore the Silver Lady on such a day; still, it was no business of his, and in a couple of minutes he was ready to accompany them.

On reaching the cavern Tony unlocked the door. Immediately inside was a sort of rude entrance hall, partly natural and partly hollowed out by manual labour, where our friends divested themselves of their dripping mackintoshes. Then it was that Tamplin first noticed that Woodruffe was carrying a small oblong mahogany case under his left arm.

"What on earth have you got there?" he demanded.

Woodruffe gave him a warning look, and glanced at Tony.

"Ask no questions," he replied in a low voice. "I will explain to you by-and-by."

Tony was busy lighting three short candles, each of which was stuck on a wooden spatula about a couple of feet long. Taking one himself, he gave a spatula each to the others, and then, with a simple "Follow me, if you please," he led the way into the interior of the cavern. The passage, which was so narrow that they were compelled to proceed in single file, and not more than seven or eight feet in height, turned and twisted in the most extraordinary way, and had several other passages nearly as wide as itself opening out of it; so that, lacking the services of a

guide, any one might easily have lost his way among its intricacies, and have wandered about for hours in its maze of many turnings without finding his way back to the entrance. The walls in many places were damp and slimy, while now and again a single heavy drop of water would fall from the roof on one or other of the party. After proceeding thus for some minutes they emerged into a spacious chamber, which Tony informed them was known as the "Hall of a Million Gems." When he had set fire to a couple of flares, which illumined the full extent of the opening, it at once became comprehensible why the place had been so named, for walls and roof alike caught the flame, and flung it back in a thousand scintillations of many-coloured light.

"Very pretty indeed," remarked Woodruffe aloud, as the flares went suddenly out. "I am glad you are not a geologist, Tamplin, and able to explain in a few commonplace sentences by what process this wonderful cavern grew to be what it is. There are some things I don't care to be enlightened about, and that is one of them."

With that they again went on their way, diving still deeper into the bowels of the hill, their candles showing like feeble tips of yellow flame.

There were two other openings, one of them being celebrated for the size and number of its stalactites and stalagmites, which Tony was in the habit of lighting up and showing to his visitors, but Woodruffe now said:

"We want to see nothing more except the Wizard's Parlour. Don't stop again till we get there."

"Here we are, gentlemen, at the entrance to the Wizard's Parlour," said Tony a few minutes later, indicating a narrow opening level with the floor of the cave, and not much more than a couple of feet in height.

Tamplin stared at it in dismay.

"You don't expect a man of my size to creep through a hole like that, do you?" he demanded.

"There is no other entrance," replied Tony. "I have seen plenty of bigger gentlemen than you, sir, squeeze themselves through it."

"This is the place mentioned in the cryptogram," said Woodruffe in a low voice to his companion. "It was in the Wizard's Parlour that the box was buried."

By this time Tony had stretched him-

self flat on the ground, and a minute later, with his spatula thrust in front of him, had wriggled like an eel through the opening.

"You next," said Woodruffe. It was with an ill grace that Tamplin proceeded to follow the guide's example, but Tony was there to hold out a helping hand, and in some fashion or other he contrived to squeeze himself through. Woodruffe came last, and although a bigger man than Tamplin, he succeeded in scrambling through without help, nor did he leave his mahogany case behind him.

They now found themselves in a vast hall, the dimensions of which the petty lights they carried wholly failed to reveal.

"Please to stand where you are, gentlemen, while I light the flares," said Tony, and with that he disappeared into the encircling gloom.

"It's an uncanny place, and I wish I was well out of it," muttered Tamplin with a shiver.

One by one the four flares placed at different angles of the cavern were lighted by the hunchback, and when the last sprang into flame, the two men became aware that they were in an immense chamber at least three times the size of the one they had first seen. In the middle of the floor was the huge stalagmite which gave its name to the cavern. It was between five and six feet in height, and as you stood at one particular spot the white and glistening mass bore no inapt resemblance to a veiled female figure arrested in the act of starting forward, as if to fly from something or some one. The legend ran that centuries ago a wizard who made his home in the recesses of the cave, inveigled a beautiful lady into it, and then, rather than let her go again, turned her into stone.

After giving a hasty glance round, Tamplin said:

"And now to find the cross which, according to the writer of the cryptogram, was carved on the wall of the cavern."

Of course, this visit, so Tamplin believed, was merely a preliminary one. They were to find the cross and take stock of the cavern generally—with Tony at their heels they could do nothing more. They must come alone some midnight force the entrance door, make their way to the Wizard's Parlour, and with the help of spade and pick, dig up the box, and possess themselves of the treasure unknown to any one.

"Let us first," said Woodruffe, "take a glance at what the old steward calls 'the pool of fathomless water';" and with that he led the way across the cavern to where a hand-rail barred their further progress. Before them yawned a huge opening in the floor, the blackness of which the flares only served to accentuate and make more awesome to peer into. Taking up a stone from one of a heap placed there for the purpose, Woodruffe dropped it into the abyss. Not till after an appreciable space of time did the sound of its sullen splash in the water far below reach their ears. The same instant Woodruffe gripped his companion by the arm.

"If I were to push you over the brink, in what strange country would you find yourself three minutes later?" he asked.

There was, or so it seemed to Tamplin, such a veiled menace in the words, that he recoiled instinctively with parted lips and starting eyes. "What a fool you are, Woodruffe!" he exclaimed next moment with an imprecation.

"You are right, Neil Tamplin. I am a fool, a weak fool, not to send you headlong into yonder abyss. Such a fate would be no more than your deserts. But I have a ridiculous prejudice against taking life in cold blood, and I had already made up my mind to afford you a chance for yours."

"In the fiend's name, what do you mean?" gasped Tamplin.

Could this stern-voiced man with the hard, set face, out of whose black eyes there gleamed a something which caused his craven soul to quake with fear, be his boon companion, his fair-seeming friend of the past month? It must be a hideous dream from which he should presently awake.

"Listen, Neil Tamplin," resumed the other, in the same stern, cold accents; "my name is not Evan Woodruffe, but Edgar Wilding. I am the brother of Fanny Wilding, of Brunton-le-Willows—ah, you may well start!—whose death lies at your door as surely as if your hands had thrust her into the water where her body was found. Over her grave I swore to be avenged on her murderer. You are that man, and it was with that object I sought you out, ingratiated myself with you, and invented a lie by means of which I succeeded in bringing you here where there is none to come between us."

"Would you assassinate me?" came in a hoarse gasp from Tamplin's livid lips.

"Were I to slay you where you stand it

would be no more than you deserve; but, as I said before, I have a prejudice against taking life in cold blood. You shall have an equal chance with myself. I have heard you boast of your skill with the pistol. Here are a brace of them," touching the case under his arm. "Between you and me it shall be a duel to the death. Only one of us two shall leave the Wizard's Parlour alive!"

All that was craven in Tamplin's nature shrank from the dread alternative thus put before him. He trembled in every limb, a cold sweat bedewed him from head to foot. Once, twice, his lips opened, but no sound issued from them. At length he contrived to stammer: "I refuse—I utterly refuse. I neither want to kill you nor be killed myself."

"As you please," said Woodruffe, in his deep tones; "but if you persist in your refusal to accept my challenge, I swear, as there is a heaven above us, that I will hurl you over the edge of yonder abyss into the water below, even should I have to go with you. Choose which you prefer."

Tamplin fell back a pace or two, but said no more. That Woodruffe, if driven to it, would carry out his threat, he felt too well assured.

Tony was standing a little way apart, his face only a shade less white than that of Tamplin.

Finding the other did not speak, Woodruffe opened the case and took out of it a brace of handsomely mounted pistols. Handing the case to the hunchback he crossed to Tamplin, and holding out the weapons, said: "They are both alike and both loaded. The choice is yours."

Tamplin took one of the pistols.

"I have brought a tape with me," went on Woodruffe, "and I propose that our guide here shall measure a space of a dozen yards, at one end of which I will take my stand and you at the other."

Still not a word from Tamplin. He was visibly quaking, and his lips showed blue against the pallor of his face. His eyes had the expression of some hunted animal brought to bay.

Woodruffe had stepped back a few paces. Turning to Tony he said: "Two of your flares are going out. Let fresh ones be lighted at once." But scarcely had the last word left his lips before there was a flash and a report. Tamplin had taken advantage of his face being turned from him to fire. The bullet carried away a

portion of the lobe of his right ear, and buried itself in the wall of the cavern.

Woodruffe turned like lightning. "Scoundrel and assassin, your blood be on your own head!" There was another flash and another report. Tamplin flung up his arms, spun round twice, and fell on his face dead.

It was dusk when Woodruffe and Tony emerged from the Silver Lady. "You must come with me," he said, laying a hand on the hunchback's shoulder. "No harm shall happen to you, but you must keep me company part of the way I am going." In a by-road near at hand a horse and trap in charge of a man were in waiting. The man was dismissed, and half a minute later Woodruffe, with Tony beside him, drove off at a rattling pace.

Some three hours later Tony was back at Crossdyke with the horse and trap, his pocket richer by ten pounds. But Woodruffe had vanished, nor did all the efforts made to trace him ever prove of the least avail.

A GREETING.

By HARRIETT STOCKALL.

Yes, dear, it has been long !
The drear, cold winter ; but to-day
Sweet Spring, with garlands in her hand,
Walks, flushed and smiling, through the land ;
The woods are thrilled with thrushes' song,
The fields are full of lambs at play.
Ah, love ! smile too, smile once again,
Like sunshine after rain !

I know it has been long !
Grief's drear, grim winter ; but to-day
Sweet Peace draws near with magic wand,
And carries comfort in her hand ;
Life thrills anew to hope's glad song,
And skies are blue that were so grey.
Ah, love ! hope too, hope once again,
After thy heavy pain !

Look at my heap of flowers !
I pulled them in our favourite spot,
The copse that was so dark and bare
When last we stood together there.
The grass, new-green with April showers,
Is brodered with forget-me-not
And primrose-stars ; while, out of sight,
Bloom violets blue and white.

Think, dear, of life's fresh flowers !
I know there is a sacred spot
Where last year's blossoms, once so fair,
Have faded, nipped by winter air.
No April sunshine, April showers,
Can bring them back, for they are not ;
But life yet spreads before thy sight
Some blossoms of delight.

Yes, dear, it has been long !
But all things earthly pass away ;
And when we reach the mystic strand
That girts the sure-abiding land,
The land that hears the angels' song,
The land of everlasting day,
Ah, love ! that country knows no pain,
Nor go we out again !

PEARL.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER I.

PEARL was tired. She said to herself that the weather was very warm for "primrose-time."

The ordinary world called the season of the year March ; but Pearl was a flower-girl, and the year for her consisted of a strangely poetic sequence. It began with violets, followed, in the first lengthening of the January days, by mimosa, the sweet scent of which floated softly about in the heavy winter air. With it came the early narcissus, then the delicate snowdrops and the daffodils. After the daffodils came the primroses, bringing, as they lay in Pearl's basket, to many a weary mind, memories of sunny country banks beneath fresh green hedgerows that flecked them with delicate shadows — memories which, for some of those who saw them, must remain for all their lives nothing but memories. Then came the wallflower, with its wonderful masses of dark colour, and immediately afterwards the pinks, the mignonette, and the roses. With these the summer weeks ran by, until the earliest approach of autumn was heralded by chrysanthemums ; and they completed the year by giving way again to the violets.

But Pearl herself had no idea of the suggestiveness of the marks that recorded the passing of the year for her. Though she was very fond of her flowers, she had no conception of them as constituting the greater part of this world's beauty. It was scarcely possible that she should have, for, except in the Parks or squares, she had never seen a growing flower. The primroses she had been selling all day to-day were to her chiefly a sign of weather which should have been cold and east-windy, but was in fact, as Pearl said to herself with a little weary sigh, "most as warm as if pinks was in."

It was about seven o'clock, and the light was growing dim in the Tottenham Court Road. The fast-falling spring twilight softened every harsh outline with a touch which, to an imaginative fancy, might have seemed almost born of a conscious desire to beautify the grim dulness. There was a softness in the air, too. It was only the softness of coming rain, but it seemed to throw a hush over the inharmonious sounds which surround the Euston Road crossing.

The shrill-voiced newspaper boys, with

"specials;" the piano-organs; the shouting omnibus conductors; the harsh squeak made by the breaks of the trams as they started and stopped; and the unceasing undercurrent of men's and women's voices of all sorts and tones, seemed one and all to be by it blended into something softer and gentler.

In the midst of all the movement and noise, with the fading sunset glow from the west just touching her face, stood Pearl, waiting to cross. She would not have owned that she was tired in so many words, for she had, at fourteen, a spirit of unconscious resolution and endurance not always found in characters trained to higher ideals and principles than Pearl had ever known. But even this could not wholly prevent the expression of weariness visible in the tired face and the languid pose of the childish limbs. Pearl was slight and tall for her age; her face was thin, with a delicate outline, and a firm little mouth. It was very white, but the whiteness was natural; it was evident that the small face had never known any childish bloom. The eyes were large and brown, with a peculiar tenderness in their expression—a tenderness that seemed beyond her years. It was as if a large and loving woman's soul dwelt in that small frame, and could only assert its presence by the look in the brown eyes.

Her dress was shabby, but it had about it no vulgar traces of past glories in the shape of worn-out trimmings. It had come from a "wardrobe" shop, of course; but it had once been a simple girlish frock, and there was a sort of natural affinity between it and its present wearer.

The great brown eyes watched the traffic with a keen and practised glance, and the moment the slightest lull occurred, Pearl seized the opportunity to thread her way across with an adroitness born of long habit and inherent decision of character.

She tucked the empty flower-basket she carried more firmly under her arm when she reached the pavement, and set off again with a decided step. It was crowded with people coming back from their daily work: their faces anxious, distressed, careless, or here and there happy. But Pearl's little composed face was in curious contrast to every one of these. They, even the happy ones, were more or less sordid. There was something in Pearl's that overcame all sordidness, something that, in other surroundings and circumstances, might have been called spiritual.

A quarter of an hour's walking brought her to a sharp turn, which she seemed to take instinctively. The turn took her up a passage between two shops—a passage so narrow and so dark that, to unaccustomed eyes, the dimness would have been bewildering after the comparative clearness of the street. This passage led between two blank walls for about fifty yards, and then a row of broken posts placed across it marked its sudden widening and its developement into a "court."

The court consisted of eight or ten houses facing each other in two narrow lines, while one house at the end, opposite the entrance, closed the space. On the corner of that house which was nearest to the passage was inscribed, in letters much obscured by dirt, the words "Pleasant Lane."

The houses were alike in the general dull blackness of their brickwork and the dilapidation of their fittings; but they differed much in detail. And the differing details in the same tenement told how they were divided and subdivided. On one side was a window the panes of which shone with cleanliness; immediately above it was one the owners of which seemed to regard its sill as the abiding-place of rubbish, for on it was a bent and battered saucepan, old boots, broken bottles, and nondescript bits of old iron. A window in a line with this had lost three of its dirty panes, and in the space thus made a hideous mangy cat had established itself. Close to this again was another, which possessed a clean though ragged blind, and had inside a straggling geranium in a pot.

The court was paved with worn-out, broken stones, and in the middle was a heap of bricks, traditionally said to be intended for its re-paving. But the landlord had postponed this process so long, that the bricks had become at once a playground for the children of the court, and a firm foundation for a rubbish heap. Stretched across the court was a rope on which a few nondescript clothes stirred feebly in the evening air, and beneath it, as Pearl entered, a group of fretful-voiced children played and squabbled with each other and a thin and snappish cur.

They were not the sole occupants of the court; two or three men were lounging against their door-posts; a little group of women near the entrance were carrying on an engrossing conversation; and on the threshold of a door on the right side of the court lay the figure of

a man evidently drunk. Behind him, with folded arms, stood a woman who was deploring, in shrill and rasping tones, to a friend in the opposite house, the fate that had led her to become his wife.

There was something irresistibly pathetic in the contrast between the present aspect of Pleasant Lane, and that which it must have borne in those long-gone days that gave it its name. Then it probably had been a grassy lane between hedges leading towards Hampstead. Now, the energy of man had claimed it, used it, and left it with nothing but its name.

At the sound of Pearl's footsteps on the rough pavement of the court, every one instinctively glanced in the direction of the entrance. The comings and goings of their neighbours were important items in the daily interests of Pleasant Lane.

When they saw who was the new-comer, a distinct expression crept into every one of their faces, and widely differing as the expression was, its foundation in every one was the same—a decided sentiment of welcome. The women at the entrance broke off in their talk to greet her with a "Good evening"; the wife of the drunken man stopped her shrill bewailing of herself long enough to nod good-naturedly to Pearl; and the men looked after her with a sort of grim approval which, if their faces had not been utterly incapable of it, would have been the beginning of a smile. Two of the children on the brick heap scrambled hastily down from it to meet her, one of them, a tiny, unsteady baby, clinging tightly to her skirt, with incoherent entreaties that she would come and play. Pearl disengaged herself quickly from its grimy small fist, and kissing its grimier face, lifted it back to its companions with a few apparently satisfactory words, and went on towards the end house of the court, in which was her home.

Two or three quick steps brought her to the doorway, and she was just going to enter, when her attention was arrested by a low whistle, and she turned sharply. At the same moment the nearest door on her left side, a door almost in the angle of the corner, was opened. Pearl went quickly towards it. The darkness within was deepened by the sudden contrast of the light from without, and would have obscured, for unaccustomed eyes, a figure that stood just inside the narrow entrance. But Pearl's eyes knew well what they sought, and no darkness hid the figure

from her. It was the figure of a man. Of his age it would have been quite impossible to conjecture with any certainty. His haggard eyes spoke of possibly forty years, his narrow slight shoulders of twenty. As a matter of fact, he was in what in a happier life would have been called his early prime, being thirty-eight years old. His thin, pinched face was drawn and disfigured all down the right side of it by paralysis, which had also given to his head a slightly trembling motion. Paralysis had besides twisted and drawn the whole of that side of his body. Added to this, his back was hopelessly deformed. His head, through this deformity, seemed to have sunk far down between his shoulders, and he had only one arm. It would be difficult to conceive of a more distorted human form, or anything farther removed from what that form might be. But Pearl looked at him with a look that seemed to exclude all knowledge of his appearance, and to look only straight at the individual disfigured by that earthly personality; and in it there was a double quantity of the tenderness which was always in her brown eyes.

"I never thought you'd have got in yet," she said brightly; "you're in a hurry for the end of the tale?"

He nodded his shaking head.

"I'm coming all right," she added. "I shan't be long having my tea." And with a smile at him, she turned and ran into the next house.

CHAPTER II.

THE December preceding this present March had been exceptionally cold. Day after day bitter frosts had been accompanied by piercing east winds and lowering grey skies.

On the coldest afternoon of the whole month, when a whistling wind, so cold as to make the very cats fly before it, was blowing through Pleasant Lane, there came into the court, as twilight began to fall, a miserable figure with a creaking-sweeper's broom in its hand; a boy followed, wheeling on a small truck a few scanty possessions. Half an hour later a light was suddenly seen to be burning in the window of a long untenanted room on the ground-floor of a house in the corner of the court, and the dwellers in Pleasant Lane became aware that they had a new neighbour.

For some reason quite impossible to

discover, an impression that this new neighbour was "well off" arose simultaneously with the discovery.

Perhaps the chief reason lay in the fact that the new-comer, who, by right of his position in the house, commanded the outer door, kept it tightly closed all the evening, a proceeding which was looked upon with great disfavour in Pleasant Lane. "A man ain't so secret as that without he has something he wants to hide," was the somewhat sententious comment made in various quarters of the court upon this innocent action. But whether it took its rise in this, or in no reason at all, the fact remained that in half-a-dozen hours the impression was as ineradicable as it was universal. And Pleasant Lane, being by no means "well off," established in its collective mind a bitter prejudice against the new-comer in consequence of his supposed superiority. No one had seen the miserable figure as it entered in the winter twilight, and the first appearance of the unknown was awaited next morning with keen interest.

The effect produced upon these waiting and prejudiced minds by the wretched personality that stumbled out of the door at eight o'clock, with a broom in its hand, may be imagined.

With a wholly unreasoning instinct the prejudices of the court solidified there and then into a concentrated dislike. A horrible outcry expressed it without a moment's delay. The boys who were lounging about yelled shrilly, and whistled through their fingers with hideous discordance; the women broke into hoarse laughs and screaming comments; the men interchanged imprecations of astonishment and contempt; the very children shrieked in mocking scorn. In the midst of all the outcry was its object, looking miserably round, and hopelessly trying to find the way out of the court. He was trembling, too. In all his wretched life there had been no moment so wretched as this. Suddenly into the midst of the court rushed Pearl. Almost before any one had realised her presence she stood beside the trembling, miserable figure.

"You dare!" she exclaimed, facing the assembled court with her head thrown back and her great brown eyes flashing. "You dare! When he can't do nothing to none of you! Cowards! that's what you are. Come on out with me," she added in a lower tone to the still trembling man; "they won't do nothing to you now." As

if the unlimited scorn expressed in the ringing childish voice had been a scourge to lash every mind that heard it, the outcry died away as suddenly as it had begun. There was a moment's dead silence, and then men, women, and boys retreated more or less shamefacedly, and Pearl and her protégé went out of the court together.

How it came to pass that Pearl had influence in the court it would have been difficult for any one to explain in detail, least of all for those who came under it. To the dwellers in Pleasant Lane Pearl's existence among them was just one of the facts of their everyday lives; a fact as commonplace and as uninteresting as any other of its dull details. They had watched her daily proceedings for months and years with the same mechanical vision with which they watched their own.

They did not realise, nor could they have expressed the fact had they done so, that the spirit that unconsciously regulated that daily life was better and higher than theirs. They never knew that a simplicity, a patience, a quiet good-nature which shone through all the intercourse Pearl held with them were the outcome of that higher spirit. But though they never knew it they felt it, and were swayed by it. As a cultured mind in looking at a beautiful picture will carry away with it, unconsciously, the lasting influence of that beauty, so on those untaught minds the uncomprehended beauty of a better life than theirs left its lasting traces in the shape of Pearl's influence over them.

Pearl herself knew nothing of her power. The large brown eyes would have opened wide indeed with wonder if any one had told her that she could make any difference in the life of Pleasant Lane. That they were good to her, that the men never swore at her, that they did as she asked them, often, were facts for which she accounted by ascribing them to kindness felt by them for her—kindness for which she was grateful with all her childish heart. They were "real good" to her, she said to herself often; adding, sometimes, that it must be because she was "all by herself," and they were sorry for her.

She was indeed "all by herself," and she was so far right, in that a good deal of rough compassion had been given to her for the fact.

Two years earlier, her mother, who had also been a flower-seller, had died in the hospital from typhoid fever; and Pearl,

who had been her only child, was left alone in the world—to fight her own battles as best she might. A neighbour of her mother's took in Pearl for the first few days, and being a kind-hearted woman took some trouble to arrange for a future home for the child. This was found with a friend of hers, a rough but respectable charwoman, who had a room in Pleasant Lane, and expressed herself willing to have Pearl as a lodger for a very small payment. With Mary Ann Grant the child settled down, going on with the flower trade to which her mother had brought her up.

It was but a lonely life, however. The poor child missed her mother terribly at first; and though weeks and months softened the actual loss of her presence, they seemed only to emphasize the blank in Pearl's life—the great blank made by the feeling that she had no one to care for, think for, or love. Mary Ann Grant wanted nothing from her. That strong and independent individual needed none of the small cares Pearl had been wont to spend on her mother; and her relations with Pearl, though kind enough, were strictly practical and businesslike.

As the days and months slipped by, the child's life seemed to her more and more empty and meaningless. She was not in the least morbid; she did not think or reason about it enough to analyse it, even had she been able. She accepted it simply enough, only now and then she wished with a heavy little sigh that the days of her mother's life could come back again.

These were the outward circumstances in Pearl's life, into which the arrival of the crippled crossing-sweeper in Pleasant Lane broke suddenly.

As they took their way together towards Oxford Street that first day, Pearl discovered incidental scraps of his history. His name was Broken Dick, he told her. "Leastways," he added, quite unconscious of the pathos of his words, "I've never heard no other." Of his early life he had no account to give—he had no clue to it. Ever since he could remember he had been a crossing-sweeper; and almost ever since he could remember he had been, as he described it, shamefacedly, "awkward-like in the limbs." He had moved and been moved of late, he told her, from one lodging to another by various circumstances, and hearing accidentally of a cheap room to let in Pleasant Lane, he had come there as a convenient locality not too far from his crossing.

So much Pearl heard when they parted at the parting of their ways; and on these facts and the thoughts they brought her, the child pondered all day long, in the intervals of business. In the evening she fell in with him again, near the entrance of the court, and he returned, as he had left it, under Pearl's protection—a protection acknowledged by the court through the medium of a wondering silence.

Two days later, Pearl announced to Mary Ann Grant her intention of going to see Broken Dick. That worthy person shrugged her shoulders with disdain, and expressed her amaze that Pearl should take any interest in "such as him." She added a few cheerful assertions to the effect that it was well known that deformed persons, being generally misers, were also frequently murderers or thieves, "seeing, you know, Pearl, they do say he's got money; it's likely enough that he'll murder you." But even this logical reasoning did not deter Pearl from her intention, and she made her way to Broken Dick's room that very evening.

The visit was only the first of many. With the first day of their meeting, a great interest in Broken Dick, and a great compassion for him, had suddenly sprung up in Pearl's childish heart.

If she were lonely, she said to herself, he was far worse off. For he, as she reasoned, had "never known no different." He had never had any one in his wretched life to care for him, or to hold even a faint likeness to the place which Pearl's mother had held in hers. "Never had no one of his own!" Pearl said to herself, musingly and sympathetically; and the thought had touched her tender heart inexpressibly. Besides this his lifelong loneliness, she realised that Broken Dick had another burden to bear, little less terrible—a burden which the child, with many a shuddering look at her own straight young limbs, told herself that she never could have borne.

The result of these feelings in Pearl's heart was that these two lonely waifs, whose courses in the great sea of London life had, accidentally, as we call it, touched each other, drew rapidly closer and closer together. Broken Dick's surprise at the first signs of interest that any fellow-creature on earth had ever taken in him, or his life, through all his thirty-eight years, was at first tinged with distrust and almost alarm. But before this feeling had time to appear, the surprise changed into the dawning of a

tremulous pleasure. He welcomed, as readily as he knew how, the new and startling light that came thus into his dreary existence.

To Pearl's life, which had been so empty, there came a fulness and content which had never been hers since her mother's death. Broken Dick's wretched personality was taken into that warm, childish heart; and to care for him and to make his life easier became her keenest wish. Her tender instinct for service found its outlet in the only womanly cares possible to her. They were none the less real because they were so practical.

At the close of her third visit to Broken Dick's miserable room, Pearl stood hesitatingly looking around before she said good night.

"Suppose I was to clean up for you a bit on Sunday mornin', should you mind?" she ventured finally.

Her proposal was received cordially by Broken Dick. That first cleaning up was followed by another and another, which developed later into efforts at decoration, one and all of which were the outcome of the same pity and love for Broken Dick. Pearl manufactured from cloth scraps a rug, to take the place of a mysterious collection of threads known to Broken Dick as his "carpet." She saved odd pence and bought a bit of muslin for a window-blind; she nailed up a picture or two from illustrated papers which had been given to Mary Ann Grant; and in a chipped mug which he had discovered she placed, whenever she had it to give, a flower or two.

One day, as she sat finishing the rug beside Broken Dick's fire, a thought struck Pearl.

"If we only had a story-book, now," she said regretfully, "so as I could have read you pieces out of it when I've done this here! They had books at the school with ever such nice pieces in them. You would have liked them!"

The evening after this Broken Dick was very late. The rug was finished and in its place on the floor, and Pearl was looking at it admiringly when the door suddenly opened and the owner of the room came in, as quickly as it was possible for him to move, and evidently in some excitement.

"I ask' for a story-book," he said, "and they said at the stall this was one o' the best!"

With the words he placed proudly in Pearl's hands a grimy and torn copy of the

"Arabian Nights' Entertainments." It possessed no covers, many of its pages were missing, and on the first it retained was scrawled in large figures the price paid for it—sevenpence.

But its defects were as nothing to either of its delighted possessors, and Pearl began to read it aloud that very evening. This had taken place about a fortnight before, and night after night since then, without one break, Pearl had read steadily through one after another of its wonderful stories, to the increasing excitement and enjoyment of Broken Dick and herself. Naturally, there was much in what they read that neither the intelligence of the cripple nor that of the child could fully grasp. But each in its way was keen. And the romance and imagination of that wonderful story-teller is in itself strong and vivid enough to hold and fascinate far duller brains than theirs.

On this March evening, when Broken Dick had come out to his door to speak to Pearl, they were in the middle of the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, and only half an hour elapsed before Pearl appeared in Broken Dick's room, as eager as he himself to go on with it. With scarcely any prelude she took up the book, which Broken Dick had opened ready for her at the place marked nightly by a bit of a broken match, and establishing herself on a stool at the table, began to read.

It was a curious little scene. There was no light but the glow of a cinder fire in the small grate the blackness of which was a cause of great pride to Pearl, and the pale spark made by one candle on the table. Pearl sat as near as possible to the candle, with her book on the table and her head resting on her hands. Broken Dick sat as nearly opposite as might be, but rather nearer to the fire, on the only other seat he possessed, a wooden chair, his eyes fixed on Pearl. The glow of the fire sent out a red circle of light. It shone dully on the nondescript colour of the opposite wall, and it caught Pearl's hair and Broken Dick's intent eyes. The court outside was fairly quiet, and the only sound to be heard was the sound of the eager childish voice.

The two were for the time in a world of their own, bounded by the red circle of firelight. It was a world far away from Pleasant Lane, from London with its struggles and sorrows, from any hardships or trials at all. It was a world full of the glamour of wonderful princes and lovely

princesses, flashing jewels, and marvellous geni—a world which seems for ever to claim credence for itself by the very magnificence of its impossibilities.

The two were also in another world of their own, of which they never dreamt—a world that was lasting, while the other was temporary; though at the same time quite as strong a contrast to their surroundings as the gorgeousness of Haroun al Raschid's days. It was a world of love and sympathy; a tiny world of unselfishness and kindness in the midst of a vaster atmosphere which breathed nothing but the opposites of these.

Pearl read on breathlessly until, at length, she reached the last words of the story. Then she suddenly raised her eyes to meet Broken Dick's, and gave a long sigh of heartfelt enjoyment.

"Don't it seem as if it must be true, Dick!" she said. Her words were more of an exclamation than a question. But his reply was literal.

"Not to say true, Pearl," he answered, with a depression in his tone; "not to no one as knows the world. But they're wonderful hearing, and that's a rare 'un. There's some more left in the book, ain't there?" he added anxiously.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "lots! And we can begin again when we've done, you see."

Broken Dick gave a contented nod to this suggestion, and a silence followed. Pearl, who had not yet moved from her place at the table, was gazing reflectively into the fire.

"Dick," she said suddenly, "it's Easter to-morrow, and it's Bank Holiday on Monday!"

"Yes, Pearl," Broken Dick answered rather absently. His mind was unable as yet to disentangle itself from Morgiana's exploits. But an instant later he seemed to take in the sense of her words. "Bank Holiday, Monday?" he repeated. "Lord, how quick it has come!"

His thoughts wandered dimly back to his last Bank Holiday, which had been spent in dreary loneliness; but his struggling thought had not connected the speedy flight of the time with his present content, when Pearl spoke again.

"Dick!" she said eagerly, "there's a concert at them rooms in Crofton Street on Bank Holiday in the evening. Will you come along with me to it? The tickets is only a penny, and Mary Ann says they do sing and play beautiful—she went there Christmas."

"I don't know, Pearl," Broken Dick began dubiously. "Concerts ain't in my way. I've never been to nothing of that, and I don't know as I could."

Pearl's face fell slightly.

"Oh, Dick," she said disappointedly, "you said, the day we heard that singing outside of that house, that you was fond of tunes; and this is ever so much better than that! You'd like it ever so! Do come, along with me, Dick!"

Broken Dick looked into her eager face, and apparently the idea that by consenting he would give Pearl great pleasure was slowly suggested to him thereby.

"All right, Pearl," he said, "I'll go with you, if you like."

Pearl's eyes shone with pleasure.

"Oh, Dick, it'll be lovely!" she cried. "Thank you, ever so! Mary Ann says she never heard better singing—and she's been! I know you'll like it, Dick!"

Ten minutes later Pearl rose to go.

"The boys is home from night school," she said, as she did so. On three nights in the week this event was Pearl's clock, and its occurrence had been signalled now by an outburst of noise in the court.

As she shut Broken Dick's room door, and came out through that leading into the court, the noise had somewhat subsided. The boys in question were chiefly gathered in a knot near the door where, on Pearl's return earlier in the evening, the drunken man had been lying. They were apparently listening to something within it. A boy of a discursive frame of mind was turning meditative catharine-wheels from it towards the corner where Broken Dick lived. Seeing Pearl, he stopped short and stood upright.

"Been with Miser Dick?" he asked, in a friendly and interested tone. "My eye, I wouldn't be him for something!"

"What do you mean?" said Pearl.

"Mean, my girl?" The boy had returned to a reversed position, and spoke from the ground. "Can't you hear O'Brien? He's going to be sold up, Monday. He's been on the drink all day, and now he's cussin' and going on again Miser Dick like blazes, and swearing he'll have his money! He's fit to kill him. Ain't it a high old game?" Therewith the red-haired boy disappeared in a catharine-wheel.

Pearl stood where she was, her face a little pale. She was well aware that the prejudice in the court against Broken Dick, though there had been no second open display of it, had only strengthened

as the weeks went by. She knew, too, that the impression of his hoarded riches was an impression no more, but a settled fact in the mind of the court. Imagination had gone so far as to decide on a locality for his wealth. He was supposed to keep it sewn up in his mattress.

She turned over these facts now, with her mind startled into fearfulness by the red-haired boy's words. Her life had made her too familiar with robbery and crime for any consummation to seem to her impossible, and a vaguely terrible dread for Broken Dick's safety crept over her.

But after a moment or two a practical reaction set in. "It ain't likely!" she said hopefully. "O'Brien's not so bad as all that. Nor ain't any of them. And Dick locks his door, nights, safe enough."

With the reassuring remembrance that she had just heard him do so, Pearl ran up her own staircase.

CHAPTER III.

"YOU ain't sorry you came, Dick?"

"Not me!" was the answer. "I can't call to mind that I've ever had such a rare time, Pearl!"

The question and answer were whispered, for Pearl and Broken Dick were sitting side by side on a bench half-way down a crowded room, at the end of which was a platform and a piano. It was the evening of the Easter Bank Holiday, and the concert in Crofton Street was just coming to an end.

Broken Dick was wearing a coat decidedly better than the ragged one he wore to his crossing; it was his very best, and the holes in it had been mended, as well as she could, by Pearl. In it was a button-hole made of a little bunch of primroses and a bit of maidenhair wired together for him by Pearl with great care and pains.

Pearl was dressed in her own "best" garment—a light jacket, which, though small for her, was the pride of her heart. At Broken Dick's words her face grew radiant with content, the great brown eyes fairly shone with joy. The words were the confirmation of a conviction which had been slowly creeping into Pearl's mind for the last few weeks, and filling it with a great happiness. It was the conviction that Broken Dick's life was more pleasant to him than it had been, and that he was really almost happy. Of her own share in this Pearl had scarcely any con-

ception. She little knew what she had done. She would have said simply, that "company had cheered him up a bit." Her pleasure in the result was quite impersonal, but it could hardly have been greater.

She glanced at him from time to time during the progress of the song that followed—the last on the programme—and every glance brought her a happier reassurance of the satisfaction on his face, and the improvement in his appearance which was the outcome of that satisfaction.

The two remained in their places until the echoes of the last encore had died away in the corners of the rapidly emptying room, and then they rose, reluctantly, and took their way out into the street.

It was a characteristic March night; the air was soft and fresh with a south-west breeze, and the sky was of that very dark blue which is only seen on spring nights. It was covered here and there with large masses of soft-looking white clouds, through which the moon was steadily making its way. For the time being it was lost to sight, and a silvery halo round one of the white clouds was the only sign of its presence.

Broken Dick and Pearl walked slowly along the street in comparative silence. It was broken every now and then by contented comments from one or the other on the evening's experiences, but the streets were very full of holiday-makers, and as some of these were by no means sure of either their way or their balance, walking adroitly enough to avoid them was by no means an easy task, especially for Broken Dick, and required a good deal of their thoughts.

At length they reached the entrance to Pleasant Lane, and, as they did so, an outburst of noise swept down the narrow passage. But noise was so everyday an occurrence in Pleasant Lane that this fact neither surprised nor startled them. With a word or two from Pearl to the effect that it was doubtless the result of Bank Holiday, they went on up the passage. But when they reached the posts across the opening, Pearl stopped to take in the facts of the case. Then she saw that the uproar was concentrated round the heap of rubbish in the middle of the court. On that heap of rubbish was O'Brien, in a state of drunkenness known to his friends as his "raging fit." He was raving incoherently and at the top of his voice, and brandishing above his

head, apparently to emphasize his words, a broken stick. Whenever he paused for breath, the pause was amply filled in by a louder outbreak of laughter and curses and cheers from the crowd of men and women who stood around, and kept up an unceasing undercurrent of comment by way of chorus.

The process of "selling up" O'Brien had evidently been effectually concluded, for his window was quite dark and his door was shut; and on the doorstep, rocking herself backwards and forwards, sat his wife surrounded by neighbours who listened interestedly and sympathisingly to the shrill vituperations she lavished on her husband.

Pearl had taken in all this, and was preparing to go on when she suddenly started. Among O'Brien's shouts and ravings she caught all at once Broken Dick's name. A remembrance of the red-haired boy's words on Saturday night flashed across her mind, filling it with a sudden alarm. She had no definite fears for Broken Dick's present safety, but she felt, instinctively, that it would be safer and better that O'Brien should not be reminded of Broken Dick more forcibly than was necessary by catching sight of him at this crisis. She laid a quiet touch on Broken Dick's arm to detain him, and considered for a moment what was best to be done. O'Brien's "raging fits" had been known to last for hours, and to grow worse as they went on. She had no clue to the length of time this one had already lasted, and it was clearly impossible that she and Broken Dick should remain where they were for an indefinite period. It was, she decided, best to go quietly up their own side of the court, and hope to pass unnoticed. O'Brien's ravings made it unlikely that they would be heard, and the darkness made it equally unlikely that they would be seen. Pearl reassured herself by a glance at the clouded moon of this last fact, and then briefly explained to Broken Dick the state of the case. He nodded assent to her proposal, and together they entered the court.

They had scarcely passed the first house when a distinct allusion to Broken Dick, in the shape of a mad threat and a curse from O'Brien, made them stop for a moment in alarm. But Pearl touched Broken Dick confidently.

"It's all right," she said, "I'm looking out for you careful."

They crept slowly on, keeping close to

the houses, and they had reached a spot not ten yards from Broken Dick's own door. He was just feeling tremblingly for his door-key in order to have it ready, when suddenly the moon broke from behind the great sheltering cloud, and a streak of brilliant light flashed into the corner where Pearl and Broken Dick stood.

O'Brien glanced half instinctively towards the suddenly lighted corner, and his eyes fell on Broken Dick. He paused one second as if for a sort of crazy, drunken recollection. The next he had picked up, from the heap he stood on, a heavy brick. He swung his right arm round his head. No one interfered.

Pearl, as in a flash of lightning, saw what was coming. She pushed Broken Dick into the corner of a doorway and placed herself in front of him. The brick flew through the air, and Pearl fell heavily on the stones of the court.

There was a fearful cry from the man behind her, and then a far more fearful silence in the court. A moment later the terrified crowd rushed with one impulse to the moonlit corner. But Pearl was gone—gone out of the moonlight and out of Pleasant Lane; and they carried her up to her own room in the same fearful silence.

Three days later, at eight o'clock in the morning, Broken Dick pushed open with difficulty the swing-door of a large florist's shop.

"I want the best flowers you keep," he said. Then as they hesitated at such a figure and such a request, he held out in a trembling hand a pound—all in small change. "It's all I've got," he said, "and I was saving it to please her with, come summer."

And laying it down he broke into choking sobs. Recovering himself, he stammered out an address and left the shop, his broom on his shoulder.

That afternoon Pearl's coffin was carried out of Pleasant Lane, invisible for its covering of scattered flowers. Behind it, in front of the weeping Mary Ann, stumbled Broken Dick. His face was white as ashes, and in his coat were Pearl's primroses and maidenhair—dead now.

Though Pearl's footsteps had left it for ever to tread pleasanter ways, the little world she had created in Pleasant Lane was not destroyed. If universal kindness be any remedy for a broken heart, Broken Dick had that remedy.

THE PROPHET OF SAINTON.

BY W. B. TYNDALL.

SAINTON is a Welsh mining village which coils across the brow of a hill and looks down into a deep valley. The hill forms one of a cluster which holds' between its gnarled feet an oblong of level land, broken up by watercourses and mine workings, and covered by numerous buildings of blackened stone. To stand a little way out of the High Street and gaze downward amid the shadows of an autumnal evening is to get a glimpse of the Inferno. In all directions below are darting out of the misty air broad red tongues of fire which tell of parent chimneys buried in thick shrouds of smoke of their own making.

One such evening, in late autumn, a woman passed out of the turmoil of the valley and began to climb an abrupt foot-path which led up the hill towards Sainton. The white dress of the wayfarer contrasting with the black hillside showed her creeping up the hill like a shadow, and it was possible to see in the brighter darts of furnace fire, which now and again illumined the night, that she carried a bundle in her arms which must have doubled the labour of the ascent. Yet she bore her burden with patience and care, sometimes pausing to see that it was safe rather than for any rest so short a stay could give her. At last she reached a place upon the hill where the path grew level for a short space across the plateau of an abandoned working.

Here by the side of the long disused pit there stood the skeleton of an old winding machine which had been left there when the mine had been worked out. The gaunt arm of the crane protruded over the pit in warning of the unfenced danger below. The level ground seemed at once to bring to the woman the thought of rest. She tottered feebly from the path and stood leaning against the deserted machinery. But even then she hastened to reassure herself of the safety of her burden. The child answered to her scrutiny with a low, querulous moan and a feeble struggle to hide itself against her breast from the sudden rush of chilly air. Covering up its face the woman turned and looked drearily into the valley. Here, where she rested, there seemed to reign the very oppression of solitude. The night in that lonely place was doubly dark and silent to the woman as she stood beside the emblem of desertion and decay. Again she

uncovered the face of the child and gazed upon it. It seemed that she must have some companionship in such a friendless spot. The child again uttered a plaintive cry, and stretched up its little hands to pull down the hood which she had lifted and to thrust her face away. A sudden quick flush of anger swept across the face of the woman. She turned from the valley and peered with straining eyes towards the village on the summit as if she would trace in the darkness the narrow and steep path which lay before her.

"Heaven help me!" she cried, her voice shrill and tremulous with anger, "and marr him, if—— No! not yet! There is yet a chance. I have still a hope. Ay! then a blessing, not a curse."

With a sudden revulsion of feeling the solitary wayfarer bent her head down over the child and broke into a fit of weeping. The tears seemed to be the complement of her spasmodic anger, for with their flow her louder cries at once ceased. With murmuring complaints of the steepness of the way, and of some grief which oppressed her, she again began to climb the tedious ascent. It was not long before she passed out of the range of the glimmering furnace-fires, and was lost in the thick darkness which by this time lay like a cloak on the hillside between the disused shaft and the village of Sainton.

A closer acquaintance with Sainton is disappointing. To climb up to it on such a night as this is to find an ill-lighted street of rough cobble-stones between two straggling rows of squalid houses. The village lies partly upon the western side of the hill, which looks down into the Inferno below, and partly upon the eastern slope, where by day the vale of the Taff forms the immediate view, and whence in the far distance can be seen the faintly-outlined hills of Brecon and Monmouth. Upon the very summit, raising a bold square tower which has for centuries served as a landmark to the country round, and a defiance to the tempests which break among the hills, stands the church. Not far from the low parapet surrounding the graveyard there cluster on a ridge, projecting on both sides north and south, the more considerable houses of Sainton, thus giving to the village a cruciform shape of which the straggling street forms' the longer limbs and the church-tower the very centre of the cross.

In the last of these houses, which stood

somewhat withdrawn from its fellows upon the north side of the village, there dwelt a man who was at that time well known not only in Sainton but through all the country round from the north to the south of the Principality. Unlike others who are held in reputation in their own country, this man was a prophet. That is to say he was one of those bards and seers in whom the Welsh peasant, imbued like all Celts with a strong sense of racial purity, loves to see the representative of a shadowy, and, by tradition, magnificent past. But this man was more than a minstrel and soothsayer. He was counsellor and medicine-man, and his practice extended much farther than the immediate district round Sainton. People came from far up the Rhondda valley and the villages about Neath to explain their ailments to him and to ask his advice.

To-night a bright flood of light streamed from the bay window of Egliniog's house, comfortably contrasting with the dim illumination of the rest of Sainton. He sat at the table in his little parlour scanning and correcting the setting of a Welsh song which he had been arranging for the harp. The instrument itself stood upon a pedestal of honour at the side of the room. Upon the surface of its gilded column was marked in black lettering a record of the contests which it had won for Egliniog. The room was furnished very quaintly, and its walls bore, instead of pictures, a miscellaneous collection of articles which were no doubt calculated to impress the minds of his simple clients with a sense of mystery and the extent of the doctor's learning.

The task on which the bard was employed had almost reached its completion, and he was about to try the result upon the harp, when the door was thrown roughly open, and a woman rushed into the room. Egliniog instinctively rose and put out his hand towards a loaded stick which hung upon the wall, but a look at the intruder arrested his gesture half-way. The bright lights shone upon a face of unusual beauty. It was very pale now and dropping with sweat, while the long black hair, damp from the fog, hung close about it, and the mouth was contorted with laboured efforts for breath; yet for all that, this face was remarkable in its loveliness. It was the face of a Sybil, or of Cassandra, as Romney painted her, with her dark locks streaming, and her wild eyes full open in the ecstasy of useless prophecy. Coming thus out of the darkness of the night, this woman

seemed a fit visitant to the prophet. But Egliniog looked startled at her appearance.

"Elsie!" he cried. "Elspeth Vaughan! For Heaven's sake, what is it with you! Why is it that you have come to me in this way?"

The woman did not answer; she could not. The way through the darkness to Sainton had increased in steepness with its approach to the top of the hill, but she had climbed with a desperate energy; and once at the summit, with her feet upon the level ridge, she had run for the rest of her journey, until the breath sobbed in her throat. Even now that she had stood for a time in the room no word could force itself through her panting lips, so for reply she held out the bundle in her arms towards Egliniog.

He took the child from her, and drawing towards him a chair with a hollow bent seat to serve as a rude cradle, he placed the child in it, and began to undo the coverings with which it was closely swathed. The woman bent down by his shoulder, watching what he did, until he told her harshly to stand away from him; then she drew off for a few feet and remained with her hands clasped together, a picture of distressful suspense.

As soon as he had uncovered the face of the child, the doctor was startled to see that one side of it was encrusted with blood, which was still oozing from a wound near the temple. He took out his handkerchief and wiped away the thickened blood as best he could; then he bent close to the wound and examined it with an anxious scrutiny.

"Who has done this?" he said.

"It was down by the mine," the woman answered. "Somebody pushed me, and I fell."

"That is a lie, Elsie. Again I ask you, who has done this?"

"It is the truth—as I live, it is the truth—somebody pushed me," the woman reiterated; "and in the fall the child was hurt. I hit my own head and was dizzy for a time; but I rushed up here. Oh, what a journey I have had! You alone can cure it."

"It is false," said Egliniog, in a tone of certainty. "How many times have you promised that you would never drink again? Do you not know that I can read you through? Ay, foolish woman, your thoughts are open before me as a printed book."

The pale face flushed to the roots of the black hair.

"It was the drink," she answered simply.

"Elsie, Elsie," the doctor said, "will you never have done with these wild ways, this wild and reckless life?"

The woman stood for a few moments, with her chin upon her breast and her hands clasped in front of her, making no answer. Then she suddenly raised her head and looked, with a quick, piercing gaze, straight into the doctor's face.

"Is it for you to complain?" she said.

The doctor was silent. He bent his head lower over the child, while the blood rushed into his face, ebbed, and left it for a moment deadly pale. The woman stood looking at him half sorrowfully, as if she regretted to make use of a power which she knew she possessed, as he sponged the crusted blood from the wound, and tied round the little head a bandage of herbs. All the time the child made neither sound nor movement; it did not seem to breathe; there was no sign that the life still lurked within its veins.

The doctor put his ear to the small white lips. The woman watched him in agony, and glared into his face as he raised his head.

"Was this the child?" he asked.

"It is he," the woman made answer, turning her half-frantic gaze from the doctor's face to the little motionless body. "It is he—flesh of your flesh, blood of your blood, Egliniog—it is he! Oh, save him, save him!"

"Ah, Elspeth," he went on, "why have you broken your word? Why have you returned, bringing sorrow to me and to yourself? Two years ago you went away promising to be seen here no more. I gave you money, and I warned you when you went that it would be ill for you and for me if ever you forswore your oath and came back—sorrow and shame for us both. My word was truth. It is ill for us—ill for you and ill for me. Who can tell for which of us the most?"

The woman made no answer; but she understood what he said, and she understood—how bitterly!—the look which was upon his face. His words seemed to break the power which held her spell-bound. She threw herself upon her knees by the small chair-cradle and burst into a flood of passionate tears, putting her hands upon the child's face and crying her lamentations over it until the cottage re-echoed with the sharp agonised sound of her voice.

At length, through the dark grief

which tore the poor woman's heart, there seemed to struggle even yet a last glimmering of hope. She left the child, and grovelling along the ground upon her knees, put up her hands and took hold of the hem of Egliniog's coat.

"Gwna yrndrech, Furdd Duw, Egliniog," she said in Welsh, "do that which is in your power, bard of God. It is my last hope, but it will not be allowed to fail. Try it, as you loved me in the time of which I dare not think, as you should love it which has gone. Try it. With good faith he will be brought back to me."

The bard knew what she meant. It was the last resource of his mysticism which she invoked, and its power was traditional, legendary, scarcely to be believed in by himself, to whom this final desperate beseeching was addressed.

Back in the far years, when everyday life moved on its way through shadows of mystery and wonder, when magic was an element of existence and faith was the lever of mountains, it was said, that the gift which was now invoked by this last passionate hope of despair, first came within human power through a miracle wrought by a man both great and holy. A Prince's son—one may imagine some wild chieftain holding a sway of life and death among the inaccessible highlands—a Prince's son lay dying. All that was known to the arts of those unlearned days had been done for him, and when the resources of their simple medicine were exhausted, there had been called in the aid of magic. Charms had been woven over the bed on which he lay; priests had muttered their invocations; and wise men, with the traditional penalty of failure before their eyes, had each tried his own peculiar remedy. But witchcraft and prayer proved as useless as medicine.

Even while he grew cold in the death-chamber, while the head-woman crossed his hands upon his breast and the lesser women knelt around the bed shrieking their keening cries, there had come a man bearing a harp upon his shoulders to the castle gates.

When they heard his errand they would have turned him from the castle with scoffing, but that the Prince, bowed with sorrow and scarcely knowing whither he went, had chanced to pass that way, and, catching in his despair at the wildest wail of hope, bade them let the strange harper in. He marched at once to the death-chamber and, turning the women out, re-

mained alone with the corpse of the Prince's dead son. Soon the listeners without heard the sounds of the harp half muffled by the closed door which intervened between them and the player, and his voice rising and falling in an air like to which for its wildness and weirdness they had never heard any strain before.

Many times repeated, the unusual harmony grew and waned in the silence of the death-room, until at last, when the hope of the Prince had turned to anger, and he was for breaking in the door to put a stop to the unseemly experiment, the music died away in a sudden broken note of joy, and there were heard sounds behind that darkened threshold which made the listeners pause and the heart of the Prince bound in his throat. And in this there was no wonder, for the voice which they had heard, the voice which had at last made answer to the long appeal of the strange harper, was the voice of the Prince's dead son.

Such is a rough paraphrase of an old Celtic metrical legend which has come to be popularly believed as a record of an actual fact which took place in an age long passed away.

So at least it seemed to both Elspeth Vaughan and to Egliniog—to the former, most of all now when, half wild with grief, she was like the Prince in the legend, ready to catch at the least waif of hope, however unreal and impalpable; while the bard of Sainton was the more willing to believe the tradition because the legend in which it was recorded had given to the successful harper the reward which was given to Abraham, that this strange power should pass to his seed for ever. Egliniog, in the midst of his triumphs of sound and song, and the adulations of the people around him, had long boasted, as Elspeth knew, that his was the ancestry which had been headed by this shadowy figure who had wrought the most mysterious and divine of miracles, the calling back of the soul when it has passed to that bourne whence there is no return.

The bard plucked his coat out of the woman's clutch and looked at her long and earnestly.

"Gwna yrndrech, Fardd Daw!" she reiterated. "Bard of God, try it. It is my last hope."

Could he dare, now that the crisis of action was upon him, to arrogate to himself such a power? The very attempt at the miracle seemed profanity. Would not

some terrible blow fall upon him, and for such audacity kill him where he stood? He looked at the child in its cradle upon the chair—the motionless marble face, scarcely contrasting with the white wrappings with which it was swathed, gave him no hope of success. He let his gaze wander from it until his eyes fell upon the golden harp with the black engraving of his triumphs, and as he looked upon it there swept into his heart a keen romantic desire to outvie all his former victories by winning a contest of which the prize was a human life. The inspiration began to take hold of him. If he succeeded, or if he failed, it was for her and not for himself that he would have made the attempt. He put forth his hand towards the instrument, and at the gesture the woman let her hands fall to her sides.

"Fardd Daw," she reiterated. "Fardd Daw."

He understood her meaning, and entering an inner closet, came forth again in the full dignity of his bardic robes, but the woman at his feet was not yet satisfied.

"Fardd Daw," she whispered again. "Fardd Daw."

"It is well," he said, following her gaze; and taking the golden wreath from the forehead of death he put it upon his own brows.

Then Elspeth Vaughan rose and placed the carved throne of the bard at the feet of the child, who throughout these fantastic preparations had given no sign of life. She removed herself to a little distance, and stood, with her arms crossed upon her breast, in an attitude of motionless resignation, which her fevered cheeks, her blazing eyes, and the quick rise and fall of her bosom, showed to be assumed. The doctor, or—to drop such a title where the treatment had gone beyond the most extravagant quackery—the robed bard, took his harp, and let his hands wander over the strings in a few preliminary notes.

Egliniog was a great harper. As he began the metrical legend of the Prince's dead son, the instrument wailed and spoke in unison with his voice like a skilfully played violin. Never in all the inspiriting contests of the Eisteddfod, had he played with such verve as now in the silent presence of this woman and of the child who lay motionless between him and her. With a sudden pause the sounds of the harp and the ringing voice ceased. That solemn moment had come when the chieftains, gathered outside the chamber of

the Prince's son, had heard his voice awakening from its sleep. The harper and Elspeth Vaughan looked eagerly at the face of the child. Egliniog thought that he saw a momentary flush of pink pass across its marble whiteness, like a faint shadow of life; but, if it were indeed so, the sign came and went like a shadow, leaving no trace behind. With despair in his heart he broke forth into that song of triumph which told in the original legend of the completion of the miracle, and ended in a succession of falling notes.

Egliniog looked at the child, and across its body at Elspeth Vaughan. The attempt had failed; the power, which in the shadowy days had wrought the wonder, was fled for ever, or had passed into some purer heart than his. There was a pause, in which the stillness of the room and of the sleeping world outside grew oppressive.

What would that woman say whom he had wronged so bitterly, and who stood there so still with her stricken face? What would she do? It seemed as if hope or despair had changed her into stone. At last Elspeth moved. She advanced, and bending over the chair-cradle, raised the child, and went swiftly towards the door. As she lifted the latch she turned and looked back at Egliniog. Perhaps, in her eyes, he made a mean, masquerading figure, sitting there in his mumming robes, and all the violent faith which had been in her heart burnt out for ever. But he never forgot that form, with its burden pressed to its breast, silhouetted by the brilliant lights of the room against the black background of the outer darkness, nor the face with its lurid beauty and that frown of hatred and contempt for himself upon it, which seemed wholly mad in its intensity.

The door closed, and he was alone. The incoming of this woman, of whom he had hoped through two years that she had passed altogether out of his life, and her outgoing seemed like some horrible vision which, after a few minutes of wakefulness, would be no more remembered. But the robes upon his shoulders, with their lying emblems of purity and strength, the harp at his side, the chair in front of him, of which the cushion still bore the impression of the little body that had lain there, told him of the reality through which he had passed, and the danger which it portended. The inspiration had gone from him; the memory of the legend, flat and lifeless now, seemed like that of some ill-acted

tragedy, the faults of which he could not forget. He let his hands, which had been mechanically fingering the strings, fall upon each side of the harp, and laid his forehead against the column.

"It is all over with me," he said. "Why did she come back and bring my sin upon my head? I saw the look in her eyes. There is no mercy. To-morrow, all will know what I am who set myself above my fellows. My power has gone from me, and I shall be no more seen."

But Egliniog was mistaken. In the dark night outside, something had happened of which he did not know. Scarcely had the cold wind of the hill blown against the face of the child, than it awoke from its death-like swoon, and, uttering a low cry, clutched with weak fingers at its mother's breast. At that unexpected touch Elspeth Vaughan staggered, and came near to falling; but she quickly recovered, and set off at a run through the straggling houses upon the ridge towards the main street of the village.

On the morning after this strange interview, the bard of Sainton awoke with a heavy heart. His power was gone. In a few hours, he reflected, his sin would be known. He could see already the change in the faces of the country people as they looked at him. He arose, and went wearily about his cottage, looking with dim eyes upon the emblems which hung upon the walls, upon the laurel wreath which he would never dare to wear again, and the harp of which the strings were stilled as though he had drawn a hot iron across their surface. Yesterday these mystic symbols had seemed to him to typify the reality of his own power; to-day, in his sudden abasement, the life and truth had gone out of them; they seemed dead falsehoods, like the pretensions which he had cherished, and which, as soon as his folly was noised abroad, would be ended for ever. His bardic robes lay upon the chair where he had cast them upon the previous night. He turned them off upon the floor with his foot, and smiled as he thought of their signification. Purity and strength, cunning and simplicity: what had any of these to do with Egliniog, than whom at that moment no man seemed more weak, impure, and foolish?

These bitter reflections were cut short by a loud knocking. Had the time already come? Egliniog walked to the door and threw it open. Upon the threshold stood a breathless messenger, who

begged him to come with all speed. A woman and a child lay very ill at one of the beer-houses in the village; without immediate aid one or both of them must die. The doctor went hurriedly forth on what his dazed mind told him would be his last errand of mercy. As he went he looked at the hill aglow with the early sunshine, at the straggling houses of Sainton, and downward to the columns of smoke, slowly creeping up, as the air rarefied, from the furnaces below. In a short time these sights which he loved would pass away from him. He had come to the determination that when his fall was known he would leave the place where he had laboured all his life and, in his own bitter words on the previous night, be no more seen. When, an hour afterwards, he came forth from the beer-house, his whole appearance was changed. The gloom had passed from his face; he walked with the assured step of a man who in the midst of dangers had found an unassailable path to safety.

Within the noisome hovel to which he had been called, the doctor had found Elspeth Vaughan and her child lying side by side upon a pallet bed. A glance had told him that the child had passed out of the insensibility which even to himself had seemed to be death. It was sleeping now a calm and healthful sleep. But with the mother it was otherwise. The strain and despair of the night had broken her down. She lay tossing in a state of semi-delirium, yet ever striving with a care, pathetic in the midst of her own suffering, not to touch nor disturb the child.

As he walked home across the hill he pondered what the end would be of the unexpected tangle in which he found himself. An hour ago ruin seemed to be looking into his face; now all the roads led to safety. If Elspeth died he would provide for the child at a distance, and the danger of discovery would never arise. If she lived, would she not be bound to him by a strong bond of gratitude for having restored to her the child which had seemed to be dead? He knew her well enough to be sure that her superstitious nature would regard the event of the previous night as a miracle wrought by some supernatural power which he had inherited. But he had himself no such delusion. The agony which he had passed through a few hours ago had lifted the curtain of sham with which he had surrounded his life, and had given him a glimpse of reality

and truth, already fading away as he began to regain his old assurance. He knew that the child could only have been in a swoon so deep as to seem to him in that hour of sudden agitation to be death itself. Nature it was who had recalled the little fellow to life, and not Egliniog, the bard, with his mumming robes, his twanged harp, and wild assumption of occult power.

It was the latter of these alternatives which happened; but with a difference. Elspeth Vaughan did not die; she crept slowly back to life, and the difference from Egliniog's calculation was that, though she lived, she never recovered her reason. At first, it seemed as if she had only escaped from death to the living grave of an asylum; but gradually the more violent symptoms of her mania passed away, and she fell into that pathetic condition which receives from the country people the kindly euphuism of innocence. Yet she was not altogether imbecile. The worldly practical side of her brain was blotted out for ever; but the wild and romantic remained and was concentrated upon her child. Her delusion led her to separate herself and him from that human companionship from which she had suffered so much. She found a deserted and half-ruined hut upon the hillside. Around this solitary dwelling she reclaimed, by her own labour, and afterwards, as his strength grew, by her son's aid, a patch of the hillside large enough to supply the vegetables on which they chiefly subsisted. Sometimes she was forced to appear in the village, and her uncouth yet beautiful appearance, together with the affliction which had befallen her, easily obtained from the charitable whatever she required. But more often she was seen at a distance from Sainton, wandering among the wildest and least frequented parts of the hills, or standing with her child clinging to her dress upon the plateau near her hut, where she had rested during her ascent to the prophet's house.

Here, more than once, Egliniog tried to approach her, but she seemed to regard him with especial fear, and fled as soon as she heard his footsteps. Once he and she met face to face upon the side of the hill. It was winter, and Elspeth, her supply of food exhausted, had been driven like a famished wolf to approach the village. They came upon each other in a hollow of the hill, and were nearly touching before either was aware of the other's presence. For a moment the opportunity came to the doctor to discover what he

had longed for years to know—what she remembered, how much she had forgotten. But he could read nothing in her face but terror at the sight of him, as she leapt up the steps away from his presence.

As the years had passed since the strange scene in his cottage, no retribution outside his own conscience had come to him. His reputation had grown, and his name was known more widely than it had been then. Everything he touched had been successful. The *Eisteddfods* had prospered until from being mere gatherings of peasants they had become fashionable institutions, supported by the money of the gentry, and even honoured more than once by the presence of royalty. In these larger conditions the bard of Sainton had maintained his supremacy over all rivals. It seemed, when, by a succession of victories, he had won the proud position of chief of the bards, that the power of the man whose spirit he had once invoked had indeed descended upon him.

One night Egliniog sat alone in the cottage at Sainton. Twenty years had gone by since Elspeth Vaughan had made her sudden appearance in that room.

While he idly turned over the leaves of his book, the interview in that room twenty years ago came back vividly to him. He thought how differently he and Elspeth had fared, and what mercy through her suffering had been vouchsafed to himself. His remorse, which, to do him justice, had caused him for a time real suffering, now sat lightly upon him, and gave just a tincture of sadness to his reflections. After all it seemed to him that the woman's life, in spite of her affliction, had not been unhappy—happier, indeed, than if the child had died, and she, in the first wild prompting of passion, had for her vengeance encompassed his ruin. A feeling of contentment came soothingly into his heart as he thought how near to the brink of the abyss he had been, and yet, if narrowly, with what completeness he had escaped. He turned his eyes to his harp, and let them linger on the long record of triumphs which twenty years had carved upon its column; and from it he looked at the skull which still grinned above the fireplace, and now bore upon its bony temples that other and heavier wreath which he had himself received from the hands of a Prince.

While his eyes rested on this proud possession there came a sound to his ears which brought him at once to his feet. A

step, sounding distinctly in the exterior silence, was upon the gravel path which led from the garden gate to the porch of his cottage, and Egliniog knew whose that hurried footfall was. He had no time to recover from his surprise when the door was flung brusquely open, and he saw Elspeth Vaughan standing before him. Bent, haggard, and weather-beaten, with a certain vacancy in her wild eyes, yet handsome still, Elspeth formed a strange contrast to the man who stood staring at her altogether astonished and half terrified. With him life had dealt less roughly, but, advancing him along the road towards a sleek and prosperous old age, had whitened his hair and lengthened his beard.

"Furdd Daw," she said.

The sound startled him. It was the first time he had heard her speak for twenty years, and her words carried him at once back to that other scene when he was so near the abyss.

"Bard of God, they must not go down to-morrow. Do you tell them. You they will believe, me they would laugh to scorn. There is danger. I can see it. Not a man must go down to-morrow. Tell them, Furdd Duw; I lay it upon you."

The thrilling voice ceased, the door closed, and he was alone. So quickly had she come and gone that he could scarcely believe that he had seen more than a phantom raised before his eyes by his too vivid memory. But at his feet there lay a leaf which had blown through the open door. He stooped and picked up this silent evidence of Elspeth's presence and stood thinking, while he rolled and crumpled it between his fingers. The leaf had crumbled into infinitesimal dust which was sprinkled over the floor before he moved.

"Nay! after all, what can she know?" he said at length. "A mad woman's word and a passing mist, which is the most worth? Why should I delay my journey? We are safe here, and it is important that I should go to the meeting to-morrow. I will be the dupe of no such folly."

The morning was bright and fresh as the bard set forth upon his journey. A wind had risen in the night and carried off the damp mist which had hung so long about Sainton. The pure air and renewed sunshine drove away whatever thoughts yet lingered in his heart of obeying Elspeth's warning. In that cloudless blue sky which made the hills seem low and familiar to him there seemed no room for danger. Egliniog travelled in patriarchal

fashion, riding upon a donkey, while his servant, who was his groom at home and his henchman abroad, trod close at his heels with the harp upon his shoulders.

The pair followed a winding path which lay near the summit of the hills and overlooked the street of grey stone cottages, roofed with monotonous blue slates, which straggles for miles along the Rhondda valley. Their progress was slow, for the lad, under the burden of the harp, had sometimes to rest, and Egliniog, conning in his mind the harmonies with which he intended to delight his audience, was contented enough with the easy pace of his humble steed. Suddenly, in the midst of the bard's reverie, the ground all around trembled with a sudden shock of earthquake, and a dead, sullen boom rolled slowly along the valley and reverberated among the hills like prolonged and distant thunder. Both man and master knew what had happened. The one letting fall the harp upon the stunted heather, the other sliding down from the back of the donkey, they together turned and looked back towards Sainton.

Over the valley among the hills there stood a column of vapour, which was neither the smoke of the furnaces nor a fresh gathering of mist, but splaying out at the top into a rough circle, hung in the clear air like the perpetual cloud over a volcano. They were two or three miles from Sainton, but they could see men and women pouring from the cottages in the valley immediately below them and rushing along the road towards that overhanging cloud. Egliniog looked down for a moment and then followed their example, running as best he could along the winding path across the hills, while his servant went by the side of his master, and saved him more than once when he was nearly falling.

But the bard was an old man, and it was long before he tottered wearily into the valley below the village and approached the great crowd of people which surrounded the pit where the disaster had occurred. They made a way through their ranks when they saw his white beard and beaver cap, and he was soon at the mouth of the shaft. The clang of the engine working the ventilating fans at double pressure emphasized the silence of the men and women, who stood with white faces, not knowing yet what to expect or how much to fear. Perhaps the explosion had not been so very severe. A party of rescuers had already made their way down the shaft, and the

cage was just preparing to descend with another batch of brave fellows.

Egliniog, not knowing why, but perhaps because he was so used to taking a foremost place among his people in Sainton, stretched out his hand to put aside a man who was just entering the cage and took the dangerous seat himself. His brain was in a whirl as he descended, keeping, like his companions, his hand over his mouth, through the smoke and flying grit.

This was a pit which had always been easy to work. The shaft, which was not deep, terminated in a cleared circle, whence radiated in all directions passages and galleries, which pierced the heart of the hill by easy gradients. This open space was encroached upon now by a blinding and pungent smoke which issued from one of the narrower and steeper galleries. It was there that the explosion had taken place, and Egliniog heard the thrilling whisper pass through the gathered crowd of miners that the coal was on fire towards the end of the passage. He stood for a time at a loss, not knowing what to say or do, until the wall of smoke opened abruptly in front of him, and a figure reeled out of it and clutched him by the arm.

"He is there, Furdd Duw," a voice said, hissing the words into his ear. "He is there. Help once more."

Egliniog looked with a shudder full into the eyes of Elapeth Vaughan. He could not tell how she came to be there, with her clutch upon his arm. Perhaps she had forced her way into the first batch of rescuers, or obeying her own presentiment of danger, had been lurking in some passage of the mine in the hope of warning her son, who was at work in the pit, and was herself a survivor of the explosion. But with her words his hesitation went from him. It seemed as if their positions were changed, and that the influence which he had long ago exercised over her had passed from himself to her. Shaking off some hand which was held out to stop him, he brushed through the crowd of men, and holding for guidance to the woman's skirt, he disappeared into the darkness.

A silence fell upon the men who had been whispering together in groups. Several would have pressed forward, but it was useless to sacrifice life in such a desperate attempt. Far above them they could hear the clanking of the engines sounding faintly, and the rush and whirr of the ventilating fans. Before long the way might become clearer and possible to follow. At present

they could only wait, hoping for some message from the darkness, and believing that their hopes were vain. Yet presently there fell upon their ears, faint at first and seemingly distant, but gradually coming nearer, the sounds of footsteps. They could tell that whoever was coming towards them was making slow and difficult progress. The footfall grew faint sometimes, and once died away altogether; but gradually the sound became more distinct, and was accompanied at intervals by a harsh, grunting cough, and continually by the noise of a deep, sobbing breathing.

In this suspense, two of the men could restrain themselves no longer. They dashed into the thick curtain of smoke, and reappeared after an interval, supporting Egliniog between them.

The bard looked very different now from when, not more than two hours ago, he was ambling tranquilly over the hills. His white hair and beard were turned black by a coating of soot and grit; his dress was torn and smoking; the beaver-mask cap had fallen from his head, and his eyes were protruding from their sockets in the severity of his exertion. But he still grappled a burden, which he half supported, half dragged, in seeming unconsciousness of the presence of the two men who had come to his assistance and were holding him on either side. That burden was the same which, a score of years before, Elspeth Vaughan had borne tenderly and breathlessly up the hill-path to the doctor's cottage at Sainton. The man who lay senseless at his feet had been the child who had lain so motionless and seemingly without life between himself and Elspeth, when he had revived that wild cure which had been wrought on the Prince's dead son.

Egliniog looked down upon the death-like face, and there came to him, with a bitter pang of remembrance, the knowledge that never between this son of his and himself, in the life of either, had there passed one spoken word or friendly glance. He saw the pale, set features, the cage come swinging down the shaft, and the body of the rescued man placed in it; he heard the cheers of the crowd ringing round the top of the pit in clamorous joy at the first evidence of success from below. Then Egliniog turned and, with a sudden loud cry, which echoed round the dark vault and was returned by the radiating passages, he rushed again into the darkness.

A groan, like a sound of anger, rose from the crowd of miners as they saw what he had done, and listened to the noise of his desperate footsteps. Their sound grew faint in the distance, and at last abruptly ceased. The men avoided each other's eyes in the faint light, and no one spoke. This time they waited without hope.

Slowly the ventilating fans overcame the smoke, driving a portion of it up the shaft and dispersing the remainder in thin vapour among the other passages of the mine. After another hour of suspense the rescuers were able to penetrate into the passage where the explosion had occurred. They had passed for some way through the murky and malodorous atmosphere before they stumbled on the body of a man, whom they easily recognised, lying upon his face with his arms stretched out in front of him. A little way further a woman lay, her head on her arm as if she had fallen asleep. So close were they together that the outstretched fingers of the man almost touched the skirt of the woman's dress. Yet Elspeth could not have known of the loyal attempt to rescue her, for, in that stew of suffocation, she must have died long before Egliniog had struggled to her feet.

When, a few days afterwards, the burial of the victims of the explosion took place in the churchyard of Sainton, Elspeth and her son—for rescue to him as to her had come too late—were placed in one grave. But Egliniog, the bard, had a grander funeral; and of those who crowded to it from the surrounding villages many stood afterwards in groups, in the churchyard of Sainton, repeating to each other how great his life had been, and what a gallant sacrifice was his death. Yet none of them understood—as to the one or the other—quite how he had lived or why he had died.

KIRKPATRICK'S CURSE.

By A. L. HARRIS.

I ALWAYS did regard Kirkpatrick as somewhat of a brute. As a boy his chief amusement lay in dissecting bluebottles and blackbeetles, though I believe his highest source of delight consisted in chopping a wasp in two and watching the two halves walk away in opposite directions.

Once, I remember, he opened a butcher's shop with a mouse, of which he had robbed

the family cat, and which he skillfully divided into joints; while the amount of entertainment I have known him extract from a moribund daddy-long-legs was as amazing as it was sickening. As a boy, I repeat, his great delight was to kill, maim, and destroy, and as a man, though compelled, if only for the sake of dignity, to abandon these innocent little amusements, he nevertheless managed to provide himself with an adult version of his most congenial form of relaxation by the means of what is comprehensibly denominated by our Gallic neighbours as "le sport." So continuously and so unweariedly did he devote himself to this last great aim that he might well have stood for the original of that traditional Englishman whose proverbial saying, "It is a fine day; let us go and kill something," has been dished up to us again and again.

He was undoubtedly—and, considering the practice he enjoyed, it was hardly to be wondered at—a splendid shot, and, as such, was an honoured guest at any country house that prided itself on the number of its slain, feathered and four-footed. He was, in fact, the envy and admiration of every man who carried a gun and the idol of the gamekeepers.

Yes, he was an ideal sportsman and capital company, but, for all that, I am bound to admit that he was a brute—not only being, as it seemed, absolutely destitute of feeling, but having a taste for cruelty which, judiciously cultivated, would not have disgraced a Roman Emperor.

It was a pity, too, for outside this ailing, he was, as I have said before, capital company—being a brilliant conversationalist, full of anecdote, and well-informed on all the principal topics of the day, whether art, science, literature, or politics.

Yet he had twice been prosecuted by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; once for brutally flogging a horse, and once for breaking a dog's leg with a kick from a heavy boot.

"Kirk," I said to him once—I called him "Kirk" for short—"how on earth can you treat dumb animals in the way you do is more than I can comprehend!"

"Bah!" he exclaimed, "what does it matter—especially if I pay for my little amusement?"—referring to the two cases I have just quoted.

"But," I continued, waxing wroth at his brutal indifference, "it is just as though you enjoyed seeing them suffer."

"Perhaps I do," was the quiet, cynical reply.

What was he like? Well, he was a rather good-looking chap in his way, at least the women mostly thought so on a first introduction. After a time, however, they generally discovered something disagreeable in his countenance, or else received some enlightenment as to his character which not unfrequently had the effect of causing them to give him the cold shoulder.

"Handsome!" I once heard a very pretty girl exclaim. "Did you hear the story of his putting the cat in the oven! Beast! He has the good looks of a bird of prey, if any."

And, really, when you came to think of it, the comparison wasn't such a bad one; there being a sort of hawk-like outline, combined with thin lips and beady-looking eyes set close together, which, taken in certain lights, gave an impression the reverse of favourable.

Anyhow, in spite of his manners, which were insinuating, his accomplishments, which were numerous, and his prospects, which were rosy—there being not only money but a baronetage looming in the future—he was, somehow or other, far from being a favourite with the fair sex, and I don't really think that, putting aside his talents as a sportsman, he was any more popular with the men.

"Kirkpatrick?" one would say; "oh, yes, he's an amusing sort of chap and a splendid shot, but an awful brute, don't you know?"

Yet, as I have before intimated, though no one could have disapproved of some of his proceedings more than myself, I continued to stick to him in a way, while he always showed himself very well-disposed towards me, and altogether we saw a good deal of each other.

Well, not to delay the commencement of the story any longer, I will skip further details and come down to a certain day in the autumn of '72—the day being, as is worth remembering, the twenty-fifth of September.

We were both of us staying at a country house for the shooting. It had been a very fine day, and we had had some first-rate sport; Kirkpatrick, in particular, had excelled himself.

We were on our way back, he and I having found ourselves separated from the rest of the party, and Kirkpatrick, flushed with success, was expatiating on the joys of killing.

"I don't care what it is," he said, "big game or little game, there's nothing to compare with it."

His nostrils dilated, and he seemed to snuff the air for something more to slay.

"That reminds me," he continued, "that I'm thinking of taking a trip to Spain next year."

"Spain," I repeated, "why Spain, may I ask?"

"I want to see a bull-fight," was the answer given with great gusto, "that is if bull-fights are not played out in that country. By Jove!" with increasing excitement, "that must be a sight worth seeing. That is sport if you like."

We were in a lane, a narrow country lane, with high hedges on either side, at the further end of which was a solitary tumble-down cottage. We were within about forty or fifty yards of this when I saw a little dog emerge, run across the road and back again; at least, hardly that, for all at once he rolled over with a yelp and lay there writhing. There had been a puff of smoke and a report, and the last barrel of Kirkpatrick's gun was empty.

"Confound you!" I shouted, "what-ever possessed you to commit such an act of senseless, wanton cruelty?"

"Pooh!" he answered, smiling in the most careless manner, "a mere common mongrel. What was the good of it?"

"Good!" I exclaimed, "why, what harm had it done you? Good heavens, Kirk, what a brute you are!"

But he only laughed lightly.

By this time some one had come out of the cottage, attracted by the animal's cries, which were pitiable in the extreme. It was an old woman, bent, grizzled, and witch-like, clad in garments which might have been the cast-offs of an extra fastidious scarecrow. She squatted down in the dust beside the poor little creature, and tried to staunch the blood which was flowing from the wound in its shoulder, with rags torn from her own clothing. But all in vain. Just as we reached the spot, the poor little thing gave a final writhe and yelp, and was out of its misery.

"Poor little beast!" I muttered, feeling in my waistcoat pocket for a coin.

Kirkpatrick leant upon his gun, and regarded the scene with sneering interest. "It was a good shot," he remarked.

The old crone, still crouching beside the small dead body, looked up at him.

"Which o' you two gents was it?" she asked quite calmly, so that I began to think that half-a-crown would settle the score satisfactorily.

Kirkpatrick, with what I thought a hateful snigger, took off his cap and bowed.

"And you done it a-purpose?" she enquired in the same tone, fixing her bleared eyes upon him.

Somehow or other I began to scent mischief. This time Kirkpatrick did more than snigger, he laughed, and as he laughed, he spurned the still palpitating body with his foot.

Then there was a change. Gathering up the limp carcass in her bare wrinkled arms, she rose to her feet, and stood there breathing fury.

"So you killed it, did you? You killed it—a poor little innocent thing as never injured you nor any other soul, and was all as I'd got to care for in the world. Curse you!"

I took Kirkpatrick by the arm, and tried to draw him on, at the same time proffering the half-crown.

"Come, my good woman," I said, "we're very sorry, but you can easily get another dog, and——"

"Sorry!" she snarled. "Sorry, is he? Look at him!"

There was no need to look, for I knew without doing so that Kirkpatrick had given way to a spasm of laughter, and altogether showed symptoms of being vastly entertained.

"Come away," I said, trying to compel him forcibly to move on. But no, he had not been so well amused for some time past, and had a mind to see the little comedy out.

The woman hugged the body to her breast with one arm, the other she pointed straight at Kirkpatrick, with her hand almost touching him.

"Curse you!" she screamed. "Laughing, are ye?" She shook her fingers in his face. "Very well, then, laugh on. Let laughter be your bane. Laugh when you ought to weep. Laugh at the altar and the grave. Laugh in your lifetime, and laugh on your death-bed."

Then I dragged him away, laughing still; and the last I saw of the old woman she was standing in the same spot, rocking the dead body of the dog in her arms as though it had been a living infant.

"Kirkpatrick," I said, "are you a fiend, or what?"

But Kirkpatrick only laughed.

At dinner that evening, during one of those sudden simultaneous silences which we have all experienced, I all at once heard a laugh which, as nothing humorous or otherwise had been recently said to provoke it, had the effect of arresting universal attention. Kirkpatrick, who was seated opposite to me, was the hilarious member, and he at once proceeded to explain.

"You must excuse me," he said, addressing the table generally, "but the fact is, I was thinking of a very ridiculous incident that happened to me earlier in the day, and of which my friend there," and he nodded across at me, "was the witness."

Of course he was at once begged to relate it.

"Oh, it was really nothing after all," he went on; "only an old hag, who might have posed for one of the witches in 'Macbeth,' cursed me with a highly melodramatic curse, and the thought of it, recurring to me just at the moment, struck me as so irresistibly comic that I transgressed in the way you all heard."

"I suppose," some one said, "that you offended her in some way or other?"

"Well, yes," he answered; "I am afraid I did."

He laughed again, and this time most of those present joined in his merriment; but for my part, I seemed to see the old woman mourning over the dead body of "all she'd got to care for in the world," and hear the poor little creature's cries and moans; and I called Kirkpatrick names in my heart which would be altogether unfit for transcription in these pages.

All the same, a little later I found myself deerstalking with him in the Highlands. We had had a long and difficult stalk, having clambered over some of the roughest ground I had ever encountered; added to which our faces were scratched with gorse, we were most uncomfortably moist by reason of a fine misty drizzle which had been falling for hours, and we were now engaged in crawling up a steep hillock on our hands and knees. Still, it was all in the day's work, and there was every reason to anticipate success in the end.

We reached the brow of the hill, and crouching among the bracken, sighted our quarry browsing below well within range. We waited a moment to regain our breath, which was pretty well exhausted, when suddenly, without the least excuse or warning, Kirkpatrick began to laugh—a loud, harsh, irrepressible sort of laugh.

Instantly the deer threw up its head and, detecting danger in the unwonted sound, was off like the wind, without giving us the chance of a shot. Small wonder that I turned round on Kirkpatrick with indistinct intentions of rending him limb from limb.

"You most outrageous jackass! You confounded idiot!" are mild and expurgated editions of the expressions I lavished on him. "Here's all our long, hard day's work thrown away. I declare when I think of the miles we've tramped and all the hardship we've endured in vain, I feel as though I should like to throttle you. Stop laughing, can't you!"

"I'm awfully sorry!" he gasped, as soon as he could speak. "I really don't know what could have possessed me—at least—well, the truth is, somehow or other, just then I happened to recall that queer episode of a few weeks back, when that old lady cursed me in such fine style for shooting her miserable mongrel. It hasn't so much as entered my head since; but all at once I seemed to see it all, and if I hadn't laughed out I should have choked, which would have been almost as bad. All the same, I should like to kick myself."

Then, with another explosion of mirth: "I say, is this the curse beginning to work? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Serve you right if it is," I grumbled.

Well, it was no good crying over spilt milk, and so, with the unsatisfactory consciousness of a whole day's sport spoilt by an instant's folly, we took our weary way back to the shooting lodge, which had been loaned us by a mutual friend.

"Waller"—my name is Waller—he said to me when we were smoking our pipes after dinner, "did you ever hear of any one named Zeuxis?"

I reflected a moment.

"Queer sort of name," I said. "Sounds foreign. No; I can't say that I have. What is he?"

"I don't know what he is at present, but he was a celebrated painter, rather before your time—in fact, he existed some few hundred years B.C."

"Oh," I answered, not feeling particularly interested in any one so very much out of date as all that, "was there anything remarkable about him when he was alive, or what suggested his name to you?"

"Well, it was not so much his life as his death that was remarkable."

"Indeed," I said, showing a little more

interest in the subject, "and how was that?"

"Why, he is said—only said, mind—to have died of laughing at the picture of an old woman he had himself painted. Queer, wasn't it?"

"Very," I assented; "too queer to be true."

Kirkpatrick did not go to Spain the next year, as he had expressed his intention of doing, one reason being that the relative—a grandfather, or great-uncle, or whoever it was—from whom he was to inherit both title and money, was taken ill and subsequently died, and he had to attend the funeral in the character, assumed for that occasion only, of chief mourner.

Now, I was not an eye-witness of what occurred on this occasion, but the scene has been described to me by one who was; what was more, Kirkpatrick gave me his account of the same later on.

The funeral, which it may be worth mentioning took place on the twenty-fifth of September, was on a very grand scale, and was attended by people for miles round. Kirkpatrick (whose baptismal denomination was Stephen, and who now, on the death of this relative, became Sir Stephen) was an object of considerable curiosity and interest to most of those who crowded the country churchyard. Consequently, it was noticeable even from the first that the new baronet showed signs of a nervous, fidgety condition, which any one in the least acquainted with him could have testified was altogether unusual. He seemed—this still on the authority of the eye-witness referred to—to be following something with his eye, something that continually evaded him, but the presence of which was evidently distasteful.

At last he spoke to one of the undertaker's men, asking him why they didn't turn that dog out.

Dog! The man was amazed and horrified. He had seen no dog, couldn't believe it possible that one could have gained admission. Certainly it should be kicked out there and then. But the animal, with true canine cunning, must have lain low, indeed it was not caught sight of, from first to last, by any one but Kirkpatrick.

The coffin was lowered. Kirkpatrick approached to look down upon it. It was observed that he stumbled slightly, as though he had tripped over something. Then, as he stood on the very verge of

the open grave, he burst into a wild peal of laughter.

Imagine, if you can, the stupefaction, the amazement, the horror of all those present. The clergyman dropped his book, and the very gravediggers stood open-mouthed, while I believe one lady fainted. And still Kirkpatrick laughed, as though at the very broadest joke that ever exercised one's risible muscles.

At last, some one who appeared to have had his wits about him approached, and, taking him by the arm, led him away to his carriage; the terrified people, who thought he had gone suddenly mad, parting right and left. Of course, this caused a tremendous lot of scandal, little else being talked of in that part of the country for weeks. Then, as nothing further seemed to come of it, and he showed no symptoms of breaking out again, it was assumed that the attack was merely hysterical, the result, it might be—this at least was the opinion of the more charitably-minded—of repressed emotion. All the same, the impression caused by this unfortunate incident was not favourable towards Kirkpatrick; as some one said at the time, "it seemed to leave a nasty taste in your mouth."

I confess I puzzled over it a good deal, not really knowing what view of the case to take, for the story, particularly when supplemented by Kirkpatrick's own version, was one at which my understanding appeared to stagger.

"I tell you," he said, "that there was a nasty, little, common brute of a dog running in and out among the crowd all the time, though, strange to say, no one made the slightest attempt to capture it. Well, you'll hardly believe me," he went on, looking at me straight between the eyes, "but, just as I stepped forward to take a final look at the coffin, the same little beast ran right between my legs, nearly upsetting me, and jumped clean into the grave. I couldn't help it, I assure you; I burst out laughing, and laughed till I was nearly black in the face, until I thought I should have burst something. Of course, everybody looked awfully shocked, but I suppose, under the circumstances, that was hardly to be wondered at."

The next time I met the eye-witness already twice referred to, I put the question to him:

"Did you see anything of a dog at the

funeral—I mean when Kirkpatrick acted so queerly?"

"Dog!" was the answer, "dog be jiggered!"

"But Kirkpatrick says one was there."

"And I say there wasn't."

So I gave it up.

This was one reason why Kirkpatrick put off his trip to Spain that year, and the following year he fell in love, or thought he did, or got into something as nearly approaching that condition as could be expected of a man with no heart, and less conscience, and about as much feeling as a rhinoceros. It was a little unfortunate, however, that the feeling, such as it was, should have been all on one side, though this will the less excite wonderment when I proceed to mention that the object of Kirkpatrick's affections was none other than that same girl who had previously compared him to a bird of prey.

No doubt his recent accession to a title and no inconsiderable wealth would have been held by many to have had a highly beneficial effect in toning down any asperities, physical or moral, that might have previously existed; only, to do her justice, I don't believe she was that sort of girl. Moreover, as is frequently the case, there was "somebody else." How then was it that she was brought, not only to accept the offer of Kirkpatrick's hand and heart, but to go so far as to meet him, by previous appointment, in the presence of a crowd of fashionable people, at the altar of St. George's, Hanover Square, evidently prepared to carry out her part of the contract?

Well, the truth was, there was undoubtedly pressure brought to bear upon her. Her parents were poor and proud. Kirkpatrick, with his title, rent-roll, and country house, was an eligible parti, to whom the "somebody else"—who was promptly suppressed, and effectually sent about his business, so it was supposed—was not fit to hold a candle, matrimonially speaking.

And so the girl gave way; indeed, I believe it was her obvious indifference, not to say unwillingness, that proved the chief attraction as far as Kirkpatrick was concerned. Sportsmanlike, he preferred the more difficult game to that which lay ready to his hand. So he hunted her down, or at least succeeded in extorting a reluctant consent, and the wedding was fixed for the twenty-fifth of September.

The twenty-fifth of September! I had reason to remember that date, and so had Kirkpatrick if he had only known it; but I believed the circumstance had entirely escaped his memory. But to get on to the wedding.

I was not only present, but occupied the important position of best man, my acquaintance with Kirkpatrick dating back so far that I suppose I might claim to be about his oldest friend. It had seemed to me that he had of late shown symptoms of an improvement in disposition. He was certainly a trifle less ready with that heavy hand and foot, and a little less active in his ill-treatment of the brute creation generally, so that I began to entertain hopes of him. It was possible that he might not make such a bad husband after all.

On the morning of the wedding, however, when I called for him at the hour agreed, I was surprised to find him looking uncommonly seedy; cadaverous, even.

He explained that he had had a bad night, a deuce of a night—not a wink of sleep till broad daylight. The reason he gave for this was somewhat singular. He said he had been disturbed by a most irritating sound which there had appeared to be nothing to account for. He hesitated for a second before he went on to describe it.

"It was just like something pattering round and round the bed all night long."

I ascribed it to nerves—those convenient accessories of the possession of which I had never before known him to show any sign.

However, he braced himself up with a brandy-and-soda and made, on the whole—with the aid of an irreproachable frock-coat—a very presentable sort of a bridegroom. The bride looked awfully pale, and, from the redness of her eyes, it was not difficult to surmise her recent occupation. The ceremony had commenced when I noticed Kirkpatrick cast a sudden glance over his shoulder, while his expression changed in a way which was almost startling.

I drew nearer and raised my eyebrows enquiringly. Putting up his hand to his mouth he hissed through his teeth the words:

"Turn that dog out!"

I looked round quite prepared to carry out the injunction; but the dog, if any, must have slipped out again or hidden in some corner. So I nodded, as much as to

say it was all right. To which he replied with a savage frown and a shake of the head.

"Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?" etc., asked the clergyman.

There was no immediate response, and glancing at Kirkpatrick, whose back was towards me, I saw that his shoulders were twitching violently.

There were rustlings and whisperings among the guests, and the clergyman, after scanning the bridegroom's face anxiously, began to repeat the solemn enquiry. He had got no further than the "Wilt thou——" when Kirkpatrick broke into a loud fit of laughter that rang through the church, rousing all sorts of mocking echoes, and rendering the bride's scream almost inaudible as she fell backwards fainting into the arms of her bridesmaids.

Of course, as before, the idea of every one present was that he had gone suddenly mad. It seemed the only solution, and yet—well, it was the twenty-fifth of September, the second anniversary of the day upon which he had been cursed for his cold-blooded cruelty, and—could there be anything in it? This was the question he himself put to me after I had accompanied him back to his hotel, every one else appearing to shrink from him. He kept perfect silence during the drive, only, when we found ourselves face to face with the door shut fast, he turned upon me and, clutching me by the arm:

"It was the dog again," he whispered hoarsely; "the dog I saw at the funeral—a common little brute. I heard it pattering down the aisle, and it reminded me——"

He broke off and appeared to be trying to recall something.

"What was it she said? That I should laugh at the grave and at the altar?" Then, suddenly raising his voice and fixing me with his eye: "Do you think there can be anything in it?"

What could I say?

"What on earth possessed you——" I began.

"I tell you," he interrupted, "that I struggled against it until I was half suffocated—until I had to give way. I suppose," with a sort of savage snarl, "I suppose they all thought I was mad?"

I shook my head vaguely, but gloomily, and was silent.

"Perhaps," he went on, "perhaps I'd better see somebody—get medical advice, you know. Very likely it's only a purely nervous affliction, and——"

He struck his forehead with his clenched fist.

"A pretty wedding-day!" he exclaimed with fury.

So that is how Kirkpatrick was a bridegroom and yet not a bridegroom. As for the lady—as though to render any renewal of the match outside the range of possibility—she slipped away on the very first opportunity and was married by special license to the individual who has been previously somewhat indefinitely referred to as "somebody else." Kirkpatrick only laughed when he heard of it; but his laugh was not pleasant to the ear.

After this, too, people began to fight shy of him, and so, finding his position strained and uncomfortable, he made up his mind to travel for a time—to go on an enlarged foreign shooting tour through those countries where the game is larger and fiercer, and the relative positions of hunter and hunted are occasionally reversed. Consequently a year had just upon elapsed without my having either seen or heard anything of him, when one day, towards the end of September, I suddenly ran against him in Paris, of all places.

"Why, my dear fellow," I said, stopping him as he was about to pass me quite obliviously, "I thought you were shooting wild elephants, or Polar bears, or such small deer?"

From his sudden change of expression it was evident that he considered the unexpected encounter a happy one.

"Waller," he said, grasping my hand with more warmth than I should have deemed him capable of expressing, "you couldn't have turned up more apropos. You're the very man I want. Come back to my hotel and I'll explain. It's a most absurd position to find myself in," was the gist of the explanation; "but the fact is, I'm engaged to fight a duel! Pistols for two, you know, all correct."

"A duel!" I repeated in astonishment; "why, what have you been doing to get mixed up in such an affair as that?"

"A mere nothing, I assure you. I was dining at a place yesterday and there was a little, fat, pompous chap at the next table holding forth to some friends about his wonderful prowess in all matters connected with sport, in which he claimed to beat any 'Anglais'—with a glance in my direction—at his own game. Finally he topped up with a cock-and-bull story that was altogether too much for me, and I burst out laughing."

Perhaps Kirkpatrick saw me start, for he continued hurriedly :

"You'd have laughed yourself if you'd heard him. You couldn't have helped it." I shook my head.

"This comes of a too familiar acquaintance with the language," I said ; "a misfortune which I am spared. However, go on."

"Well, as I was saying, I burst out laughing, whereupon the little braggadocio retaliated by throwing the contents of his wine-glass in my face. It wasn't half a bad shot either," he commented calmly and impartially ; "and after that, of course, there was a regular rumpus, and the result is that a meeting has been arranged to take place between us to-morrow morning, at eight o'clock, in the Bois de Boulogne, and you're the very man I want for my second."

"Of course," I said, "there's no prospect of anything serious coming of it?"

"Serious!" And he laughed loud and long—a sort of laugh that got on your nerves. "Serious, and in France? No, indeed! You know what sort of a shot I am!—though I've never gone in for this sort of game before. I shall just wing him and let him off easily. In fact," with a frown, "the only thing that annoys me about the business is the fear of its leaking out. Just think how I should be chaffed! Of course, you'll be mum?"

I considered it unnecessary to do more than nod in reply.

"To-morrow morning at eight o'clock," I repeated slowly. "By-the-bye, what is to-morrow—what day of the month, I mean?"

"To-morrow," he answered carelessly ; "oh, it's the twenty-fifth of Sep—— By Jove!" His face changed suddenly, and I knew what was passing through his mind. "Well, what of that?" he continued, with a suspicion of recklessness. "Let me see. It'll be the third anniversary, won't it? We'll see what comes of it."

We spent the remainder of the day together, parting at an early hour as we had to be up betimes. Kirkpatrick was in excellent spirits when we said good-night ; but when I called for him soon after seven, as had been arranged, he looked pale and disturbed.

"Waller," he said, as he gave me a hand that was cold and feverish to the touch, "there's been a dog, or a cat, or some such animal in the room the greater part of the night—pattering about the

floor, jumping on the bed, and pulling at the clothes—so that I couldn't get any sleep."

"Why didn't you get up and let it out?" I asked.

"So I did, but then it came and scratched at the door."

"A mouse or a rat," I suggested.

"Must have been a jolly big one to make the row it did."

We were the first on the field. It was a dull, chilly morning, and while we waited and shivered, I found myself wishing that it was any other day than the twenty-fifth of September.

Kirkpatrick had described his antagonist as a fat, pompous little man ; and certainly when he put in his appearance, accompanied by a couple of friends and a member of the medical profession, he struck me—what with his waxed moustache, his swagger, and his strut—as by no means a formidable adversary.

"Did you ever see such a belligerent cock-sparrow?" asked Kirkpatrick, as I approached him after the usual salutations had been exchanged and preliminaries arranged.

"All the same, he may be better than he looks," I answered. "Now mind, you are to fire on the dropping of a handkerchief. For heaven's sake, man, don't start laughing now!"

He made an effort and choked down his ill-timed mirth, and we assumed our respective positions.

I was dividing my attention between Kirkpatrick and the man with the handkerchief, and was much disturbed to observe from the tremulous motion of the former's shoulders that he seemed to be struggling with a desire to burst out laughing in his antagonist's face.

I saw the handkerchief fall, and heard two shots ring out almost simultaneously. Had Kirkpatrick winged his man, according to his expressed intention? Apparently not, for the other stood there to all appearance uninjured, while Kirkpatrick—— Good heavens! I saw his head droop, his whole body become limp and wavering, and was just in time to catch him as he swayed forward.

"He has done for me," he whispered, as I bent over him. "I'm shot in the breast. I was choking with laughter, and couldn't aim straight. Curse the old hag!" Then he fainted.

But he was not done for, as it happened. The wound was bound up, and he was

taken back by slow degrees to the hotel, where the ball was successfully extracted; and I was informed that, though it had gone within a hair's breadth of a vital part, still, with care, there was every reason to hope he would recover. Everything depended on his being kept absolutely quiet and free from the slightest approach to excitement, otherwise—— An all-comprehensive shrug of the shoulders completed the sentence. A sister in black, with white flapping headgear, was installed as nurse; but it seemed to me only right that he should have some one by him who could speak his own language—not that he was to be allowed to utter a syllable on pain of dissolution. So I made up my mind to sit up with him for at least that night.

It was somewhere about the small hours when, as I sat and dozed in my chair, I heard a faint sound outside the door—a faint scratching sound, which gradually increased until it became more or less of a disturbing influence. The nurse heard it and, putting her finger to her lip, rose, and gliding across the room like a shadow, opened the door softly and looked out. Then, closing it with the same degree of carefulness, she glanced at me with a slightly perplexed face and shook her head, as though to intimate that there was nothing there after all. And yet we had both heard the sound distinctly. Then came another interval of silent watching, and I was just slipping off into a sleepy unconsciousness when——

What was that!

A noise of something pattering over the bare polished boards. I heard it quite plainly, and—yes, by Jove! so did Kirkpatrick, for he moved his head on his pillow, and his eyes opened and wandered round the room, then seemed to concentrate themselves upon a certain spot.

Did he see anything? His lips moved, and he made an effort to raise himself in the bed.

Instantly the nurse was at his side, adjuring him to be still. But no, he would not; and, seeing that for some reason he was determined to sit up, she summoned me with a glance—as much as to say we must let him have his own way—and we both assisted to raise him to a sitting position, supporting him in our arms. His appearance was ghastly in the extreme, his cheeks being 'sunken, his eyes seeming to have receded into his

head, and his entire countenance being of a bluish pallor. The pattering sound continued at intervals, though nothing was to be seen.

"Mice," I said to myself, "mice in the wainscoting."

Then, speaking very gently:

"What is it, old man? You know you oughtn't to move or excite yourself in the very least if you want your wound to heal. Lie down again, there's a good chap."

But he only shook his head ever so slightly and pointed. I followed the direction of his finger and saw—nothing. I told him so.

"There is nothing there, I assure you. There are only the nurse and I——"

At that moment, as though to give me the lie direct, I distinctly felt something brush past me. Start! I couldn't help it, and looking across at the nurse, I saw that her lips were moving rapidly, as though she, too, was conscious of something that made it advisable to fortify herself with a paternoster or two.

"Lie down, I implore you!" I said; "you are doing yourself no end of harm, and all for nothing."

Instead of complying with my request he raised himself another inch or two and pointed again, this time to a particular spot just at the foot of his bed, and gasped out the words:

"Look—there—the dog!"

We both tried to hush him into silence; but it was no good, we only succeeded in increasing his excitement. I felt the perspiration running down my forehead. Was there anything there or not? The pattering sound had ceased; but—well, I was aware of the most eerie sensation I had ever experienced in my life. Then, to my horror, I heard Kirkpatrick begin to laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" a weak, husky ghost of a laugh.

"Hush, for your life!" I cried; while the nurse looked at me in horror, and neither of us dared move to summon additional assistance.

"Ha, ha, ha! What was it she said? That I should laugh on my death-bed? Well, it's a jolly death; better die laughing than—— Look at the dog! See his tongue hanging out all black and swollen—and the wound in his shoulder! That's the same dog I shot three years ago. Ha, ha!——"

The laughter ceased abruptly. I heard the exclamation "Mon Dieu!" from the

woman as I felt the form I was supporting collapse and become a dead weight in my arms, while, upon the snow-white linen above the breast, there appeared a small red patch, which spread and spread until it seemed to turn everything red before me.

This was the beginning of the end. I took the body back with me to England, and it was laid beside that other which had been interred in the country churchyard two years previously. This was nearly twenty years ago, but, for all that, whenever any of the present Kirkpatricks hear a sound of ghostly pattering they always know that misfortune of some kind is at hand.

SPRING.

BY SUSAN K. PHILLIPS.

UPON the threshold of the earth she stands,
Seeing the wild work of the wintry year,
A wreath of hawthorn in her little hands,
Her eyes' soft smiling shining through a tear;
And as across the frozen plains she looks,
And murmurs to the dreary world, "Arise,"
There wakes a music in the thawing brooks,
The bright blue flashes in the sullen skies.

Over the snow she glides with fairy feet,
And wheresoe'er the happy steps alight,
The fresh green grasses give them welcome sweet,
The black sod gleams with golden aconite;
The primrose with her moonlight-coloured face
Peeps from the mosses round the budding trees;
And prompt the coming of their queen to grace,
Shy flowers fling fragrance to the western breeze.

The great sea laughs and dimples to her call,
The wavelets crisp and ripple on the beach;
And where her tears in sunny showers fall
The birch leaves store her diamonds, all and each;
Blackbird and throstle in a chorus glad
Make every bosky grove and thicket ring,
Singing, "Nor Love nor Life to-day is sad,
She comes, she comes, our lady, who is Spring."

And weary hearts and eyes with weeping dim,
Through lonely hours of yearning and regret,
Hearing the thrill in Nature's joyous hymn,
Own hope, and love, and beauty wait them yet;
Autumn, with all her loss and bode, is gone;
Winter is past, with his long cruel reign;
The fair young princess claims her verdant throne;
Spring's yearly miracle is wrought again.

"BROWN'S PATENT."

BY BARBARA DEMPSTER.

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"Miss Carewe's Fortune," "A Discontented Maiden," etc., etc.*

CHAPTER I.

IT was one of those pale, bleak days at the beginning of March, when the east wind reigns supreme over country and town.

A squalid street on the outskirts of a great manufacturing town in the Midlands received the full brunt of its cold fury.

The door of one of the houses opened and a young man came out. As he stepped into the street, the east wind swooped down with greater fury than ever upon the street. But the young man stood full in its blast, gazing straight across the road at a window of a house opposite, at which a girl stood looking out, but he did not see the girl, any more than he felt the icy blast.

He stood looking straight before him, his eyes burning with the fire of fulfilled ambition, before which every other interest paled, and for the moment became as nothing, all lost in that blind, burning, bewildering triumph of ambition's satisfied lust.

The girl over the way watched him as he stood there. Some men coming down the street, their faces haggard and careworn, glanced at him with sullen anger and hate. They were out on strike, and men, wives, and children were already feeling the pinch of hunger. He was a non-union man, a blackleg.

"You'd best look out; your day's coming, Mike Chester!" said one, with a savage laugh, hustling roughly against him as he passed; "we haven't forgotten you—have we, lads?"

Michael Chester, roughly awakened once more to the external realities of his daily life, looked after them with a frown; but it died away, and he laughed with a touch of kindly contempt.

"Poor chaps!" he said, and the rigid lines of his face relaxed. He was vaguely ashamed of the intense emotion which had possessed him, body, soul, and spirit.

As he smiled, the girl watching him opposite ran from the window, and a moment later was out in the wind-swept street.

A thin cotton frock, worn and shrunken, ill-covered her. Her magnificent hair was bundled into an untidy knot at the back of her head. Her hands and arms were red and coarse with hard work. But there was a promise of rare beauty in the face, and even in the thin figure, angular and unformed yet, of a girl of barely sixteen.

She laughed lightly as she met the young workman, who had, after a second's hesitation, crossed the street on seeing her; but there was a curious bright searching in her eyes as she looked up into his face.

"What's the row?" she asked. Her tone was musical, and the accent more refined than could have been expected from the appearance of her dress and sur-

roundings; but her father had drifted down into Chandler Street from higher levels, and though his daughter had known no different associations, she had profited by inherited privileges. Her grammar and manner of speech had also, during the past two years, since her acquaintance with the young workman who lived over the way, considerably improved; his own accent and diction having no relation at all to the present circumstances and associations of his life. Occasionally the girl relapsed—generally with intention, as at the present moment—into the rough vernacular of her neighbours. That strange unseeing light in his eyes five minutes ago had hurt her as if it had burned into her own heart and soul.

"Old Frame is dead," he said, and now there was a touch of real feeling in his voice.

"Is he? Lord! I'm sorry! What'll Fan do?" But there was still that keen searching in her eyes, as if her question had not yet been answered.

Perhaps the young man felt it to be so, for he averted his face for a second, as if to avoid the bright, intelligent gaze of the grey eyes.

"Fanny! Oh, she is provided for," awkwardly.

"Well, that's news! I shouldn't have thought old Frame had a fortune to leave. You'll miss him."

"Yes, I shall miss him," he said simply.

"You haven't too many friends here," she said.

He looked at her. Neither ragged frock, nor the disfiguring marks of rough toil, nor that dreary hand-to-mouth existence, could blot out the lovely promise of her awakening womanhood.

"No," he said, with a slight strange smile that illumined his face, as he looked into her eyes, "and so they all count."

She blushed crimson. She shivered slightly, and for the first time he became conscious that she was standing out there in the biting blast in the scanty cotton frock.

"You must go in," he said. "This wind's enough to kill you. I shall come in to-night at the usual time. I have to go out to Atkinson's Mill after I've seen to a few other things about poor Frame."

"Don't you be too late getting back," she said with a laugh, as she recovered herself a little. "Mill Lane is a lonely lane, and the lads are mad against you non-union men."

"I'll be with you at eight as usual," he said, smiling back at her.

For more than a year now three times a week, regularly, had he come at the same time to give her her evening's lessons.

CHAPTER II.

THE afternoon passed into the evening. It was half-past seven, and Patience was still waiting for her father to come in for his supper. For the past two months, since the spirit of strikes had been in the air, his comings and goings had been irregular.

He had never done a stroke of work, unless under the direst compulsion, in his life; but he was now the most energetic supporter of the labour unions.

Patience sat down on a stool before the fire and drifted into a day-dream, in which she lived through again all the wonderful changes which had taken place in her life, since that day when Michael Chester had first taught her that even such a poverty-stricken life as hers need not be entirely hopeless and ugly.

The miserable room, almost destitute of furniture, the bare floor she had herself scrubbed, the clothes she had washed and ironed, the physical exhaustion following on insufficiency of food—for that day she had only broken her fast with bread, though no one outside their door would ever know it—were all forgotten as she sat there in that dream; the only outer influence breaking into it, floating to her from a posy of white spring flowers, which Michael had brought her from the market that morning. The house door opening roughly awoke her. It was her father at last.

For a moment she thought he had been drinking, which vice, however, was no failing of his. He was a loafer, pure and simple.

He was labouring under some intense excitement. The pale apathy of his face was flushed into vivid life. The real intelligence of his mind shone through the mask of indolence and indifference it usually wore. He glanced round the room, then at the meagre supper on the table, then at his daughter in her washed-out frock and her shabby shoes, with her coarse, reddened hands.

"Confound it, Patience!" he said, "what do you mean by going about such a scarecrow? It makes a man sick to have a slattern about the house!"

Her eyes opened wider. Their brilliant

amazement, as they gazed steadily at him, seemed to sting him as if their astonishment had been scorn.

"You needn't stare at me like that!" he said. "Do you think I don't know that you have thought, like the rest of the confounded scum about us, that I've done nothing for you or myself? Curse them all. But they'll have something else to say now! Brains are the masters of the world to-day, and a man's hands may well lie idle on his knees while he sits and thinks out work for other hands to do. I don't deny but that we've gone rather low down—in fact, we may have been said to have touched the gutter!" with another look of fierce disgust about him. "But it's over now. Patience! What do you say to being an heiress?" and he laughed roughly and boisterously, and rubbed his smooth hands.

"An heiress!" she gasped.

"Yes—I've succeeded at last! For years I've been working it out! I've made a discovery that will revolutionise chemistry. It'll make our fortune, and you—you will be able to give yourself as many confounded airs as Miss Cottons herself."

"But, father——" always staring at him with those wide, brilliant eyes. Was there something in his excitement that did not ring true?

"I'm not going to tell you any more!" roughly; "I know how you women blab. The first thing I shall do is to send you to school—in London or Paris—and you shall have the best masters and everything you want!" rapidly enumerating all the new privileges and advantages which were to come into her life.

The colour flushed up into her face as the whole meaning of this new wealth was borne into her girl's soul.

All her instincts tended to ease and luxury of existence. She was ambitious.

"And mind you, I won't have you coming round here, and keeping up the low-born acquaintances you have to a certain extent been compelled to make. Once out of this, and your life here is done with for ever."

"I hope so," with a toss of her head, half the flippancy of ignorance, half the expression of a better feeling, in which, proud and passionate, she resented all the sneers and scoffs which had been cast at her father. "There aren't so many I'd care to keep up. They've all mostly looked down on me. There's only Mike Chester," with a blush and a conscious laugh.

"Mike Chester!" Her father brought his hand down on the table with a force that set all the coarse, broken crockery jangling. "Don't let me catch you, after this day, speaking a word to that sneaking blackleg!"

"I shall!" The girl's face darkened into a sullen determination as strong as his own. "He's the only friend I've had. He's taught me that life—even in the gutter—can be made worth living. But for him——"

The words were crushed on her lips by a blow which sent her reeling back against the wall.

"Curse you!" Her father, his face livid with rage, could hardly articulate the words. "If I catch you so much as looking at him, I'll take you by the shoulders, and turn you out of my door; and, mind, I mean it!" and, turning on his heel, he strode out of the room and out of the house.

She stood mechanically wiping the blood from her bruised lips. She hardly felt the pain; she was dazed by the horrible surprise of the blow. It was the first time her father had ever raised his hand against her. With all his sins of omission towards her, he had rarely even spoken an angry word to her.

"He is lying!" she said. The blow was the brutal expression of it.

The clock struck eight.

"Michael! Michael!" she sobbed, "come to me. I know that I'm not good enough, and I know you think so, somewhere down in your heart, though you've always been good to me. But only come, and I'll give my whole life so you shall not regret. What do I care for the money? I'll go with you in rags to the end of the earth, even though I knew, if it was to you the fortune had come, that you wouldn't so much as think of me!"

But the evening passed slowly and drearily away, and he did not come. For the first time since their acquaintance he failed her.

"I saw it in his eyes when he stood looking across the street!" she said, as the night passed into the grey dawn. "He didn't know, perhaps, but there was no room for me in his thoughts then!"

CHAPTER III.

A HANDSOME barouche stood before the office-door of the great chemical works of Brown and Lloyd's.

In it sat a woman, beautiful and young—for though she had been a widow now for nearly two years she was barely twenty-three. Three years ago she had made a splendid match, marrying wealth, and family, and title, the last two items being important factors in furthering the social ambition of a girl who already possessed money to spare. It would have been difficult to recognise in the Lady Mills of to-day the insufficiently fed and clad girl who had been looked down upon even by Chandler Street. But she was as well-known a figure in the town as her father, whose rapid rise from extreme poverty to great wealth had been watched with much interest. "Brown's Patent," by which name his lucky discovery was always known, had fulfilled, and almost more than fulfilled, his expectations. To-day he was one of the wealthiest men in the Midlands.

The very day after her father had announced the news of their good fortune, he had taken her away from Chandler Street. For three years she had never been near the town at all. More than two of these she had spent at school, where she had done splendid work. Then she had come triumphantly through the ordeal of a London season, at the end of which she had married Sir John Mills, one of the most eligible men in society.

She was on a visit to her father now. Mr. Joseph Brown had built a magnificent house in the suburbs.

Lady Mills had come in to do some shopping that afternoon, and was now waiting outside the office to drive her father home.

It was a lovely May afternoon, the heat was like summer. Lady Mills was in a bad temper, though there was no expression of it in the fashionable languor of her beautiful face. An expected invitation to a house, not royal, but where royalty was an intimate guest, had not arrived; and the last new dress from her dressmaker had just missed that subtle touch which made Lady Mills's dresses celebrated.

Suddenly just the slightest pucker broke the smooth white lines of her forehead, and she glanced round. A familiar fragrance, which had long ago ceased to have the power of awaking actual pain, but which always fell on her senses as a faintly displeasing memory, made itself felt in the hot, close air about her.

A girl, shabbily clad, with an attempt at vulgar finery, and with a pretty and rather bold face, stood by the carriage

door, carrying a basket of grasses and white narcissus. As their eyes met, Lady Mills started, while a half-aggressive, half-ashamed smile crossed the girl's face when she saw that she was recognised.

"Do you want any flowers to-day?" she asked, with a vulgar affectation of indifference.

"Fanny—Fanny Frame!" said Lady Mills. "It is such a long time since I have seen you. What have you been doing with yourself?"

The coarsening and vulgarising of the girl's whole appearance showed that moral as well as physical deterioration had taken place within her.

It was an enigma that Lady Mills could not solve. It interested her more than the girl herself. In what way had the influence which had once been so irresistible in her own life, failed here in this girl's?

"Are you living alone?" she asked, prompted by that curiosity, "or have you friends?"

"Oh, yes," with a half-angry, half-jeering toss of her head, "friends of a sort—what poor girls like me may expect. There's one of them," with a venomous bitterness, nodding her head across the road.

Down its hot, dusty pavement, in the glare of the pitiless sunlight, a workman was coming. He walked with a slightly halting gait. But there was a greater change in his whole bearing and appearance than the mere physical blemish of lameness.

The old alertness and decision which had been the visible embodiment of the moral strength and resolution of a man who, through fair weather or foul, in spite of hunger and hardship and cold, meant one day to reach the goal of his soul's ambitions, had vanished; and Lady Mills, as she turned her head reluctantly to look from her luxurious carriage across the street at the workman, trudging home, through the heat and dust, from his daily toil, knew that the Michael Chester of to-day was not the Michael Chester of that far-off one, in which he had held out his hand to lift her from the lower levels on which she was treading.

But what had caused this change in the man himself?

She looked across at him. But he never once glanced in her direction. He walked on, the halting gait contrasting so pitifully with the lithe activity of the old days, his eyes looking straight before him, his ex-

pressionless face utterly oblivious of her very existence. So he and she had passed each other many times since the days when they had lived in Chandler Street.

As he passed, she turned back to Fanny, who was staring after her guardian with frowning eyes.

"Come and see me this evening," she said quickly, thinking only of the enigma, and of poor coarse, tawdry Fanny as a possible key. "Give me those flowers—I will have them all."

The smart footman standing near, came forward to lift the flowers into the carriage, but Lady Mills took them herself from the girl's hands, and dropped a sovereign into her empty basket.

At the same moment, Mr. Joseph Brown, portly, calmly expansive, as befits the successful man, came out of the office.

Fanny, for a second, was stupefied with delight at the sight of the gold coin.

"I'll come, my lady," she said, nodding her head. "Whether Mike is angry or not," she added sullenly to herself, while the carriage rolled off.

In the next street it overtook the workman.

As Lady Mills caught sight of him on in front, she broke off in something she was saying to her father about her future movements.

"There is Michael Chester," she said. "How is it that he is still only a workman? I always thought he would get on."

Mr. Brown adjusted his gold-rimmed eye-glasses to look on down the street at the figure with its halting gait.

"I always said you had too great an opinion of him," he said testily. "There was no true grit in him. All flash in the pan, and that dazzled your girl's eyes."

"There was grit—in those days. I won't wonder why he hates us so!"

"Hate—I don't see why you should call it that. He knows his place, that's all—confound his insolence!"

"Yes," said Lady Mills, with a little heartless laugh.

She was thinking of the letter she had written from Paris, braving her father's anger, to Michael Chester, asking him to forgive her for having doubted him for not coming to her that evening. She had only just learned the reason. On his way back from Atkinson's Mill he had been set upon in that lonely lane by a gang of union men, out on strike, who had beaten the life almost out of him. He had been taken to the nearest infirmary, where he

had lain for weeks between life and death. He had come out of the illness with that halting step, and it was said that he would never be quite the same man again.

Patience had heard nothing of the ruffianly assault until months afterwards. Then she had written, and the letter was returned to her, torn in half, with not a single word either of anger, reproach, or the forgiveness for which she had pleaded. But the brutal contempt of the torn letter was sufficient. It could even bring the blood into her face to-day when she remembered it. As she did now.

The carriage was just passing the workman. She suddenly lifted the fragrant flowers lying on her lap and tossed them out of the carriage into the dusty street. A group of ragged children playing in the road, just where the fragrant shower fell, flung themselves on the flowers with shouts of delight. The workman turned his head. The carriage rolled on.

"Rather extravagant, Patience, isn't it?" said her father in amused surprise. "Those little beggars would far sooner have had a few coppers."

But there was a brilliant light shining in Lady Mills's eyes. Michael Chester had looked at her at last, and she knew that the cruel insult of that torn letter was amply avenged.

CHAPTER IV.

FANNY appeared at the Towers that evening. She was taken, by Lady Mills's orders, to the room which she always used as her own sitting-room when staying with her father. It opened off her dressing and bedroom. Fanny was ushered into this beautiful apartment, full of the fragrance of hothouse flowers, with its silken hangings and soft cushions, and the hundred and one costly nicknacks which make up the daily surroundings of a wealthy and fashionable woman.

She had decked herself in all her tawdry finery, and looked a pitiful and pathetic figure enough, amid the refined splendor through which she at first moved timidly and awestruck.

"And to think that she was once just like me!" she said, stopping to stare at herself with envious, yet self-adoring eyes; for she could see no difference between herself to-day and the girl she had once almost looked down upon in Chandler Street. She used to pity her for her inability to procure feathers for her

hat, never understanding that even when on the lowest round of the social ladder, Patience would never have adorned herself with the crude, ugly colours and the monstrosities of caricatures which poor Fanny called feathers. The difference of taste between them, even in that trifle, was but the first note of a gamut which, ever mounting, set them as far apart as the Poles.

As she grew more accustomed to the splendour about her, she continued her investigations further afield. A curtain-draped doorway attracted her attention. Drawing aside the curtain, she saw a door ajar. She pushed it open, and found herself in Lady Mills's dressing-room. It was empty, the maid having gone downstairs for her supper.

Staring about her with the same envious greed, her eyes were caught by a ray of sparkling light that flashed from one spot of the dressing-table. She advanced with childish curiosity to look.

Five minutes later she was back in the other room, a bright spot burning on either cheek, and a look in her eyes which, through all the pettinesses, and vulgarities, and faults of her poor little discontented life, had never been there before.

She was sitting on the edge of one of the silken-covered chairs, when Lady Mills, fair and stately in her black dinner dress, which left bare the beautiful white throat and arms, entered the room.

"I am so sorry to keep you waiting," she said, with the same unaffected regret with which she would have "spoken to a duchess," poor Fanny thought afterwards. "But I could not come sooner."

Then the smile on her lips faded, and when she smiled again some of the sweetness had vanished. The glaring vulgarity of the figure before her, crowned with its pitiful monstrosity of flowers and ludicrous feathers, had jarred on her fastidious, educated taste with disgust and pitying amusement. But as she held out her hand to her old associate, she saw, thrust into the bosom of the crude blue dress, a bunch of white narcissus, and she was made suddenly vividly conscious that, for the first time for years, she was wearing a knot of them in her own beautiful dinner dress. It fell on her with a shock of burning, intolerable shame that she and that impossible, vulgar creature were both wearing the favourite flowers of the same man. She drew them out from her bodice and laid them down on the table.

"I want you to tell me something of

your life, if you do not mind," she said. "Then I might find out how I could help you."

"Well, there's not much to say. Poverty and drudgery from morning to night. I haven't been lucky like you;" but the rude familiarity was less aggressive, and Fanny's eyes no longer met with frank boldness Lady Mills's quiet gaze.

"Tell me why you are selling flowers in the streets?"

"It's as good as any other work. And then you've got your freedom. I don't choose to be anybody's slave—and I've made Mike understand that by this time. I suppose you, too," bitterly, "think I ought to be in service. But not I! I tried it once—and I went nearly mad."

"Then—Mr. Chester doesn't like——"

"I don't care what he likes," angrily. "He can talk. When he's cheated me out of my lawful rights. Grandfather left me money to keep me like a lady—I know he did—he told the woman who nursed him just before he died, and that Mike knew all about it. When he'd gone Mike stole the money and he won't say what he's done with it, though I've never left him alone about it. All he says is that it has gone. Grandfather was a miser! I dare say there were hundreds of pounds! Mike's got it all somewhere, unless he's spent it, but he lives like a pauper."

A sudden remembrance came to Lady Mills of having heard that Michael Chester had given up the greater part of his wages to support Fanny, ever since her grandfather died and she had been left, a child of ten, penniless and friendless.

Was it possible that it had been in expiation? That this wild story of the girl's was true?

"He pretends to look after me," with a hard laugh. "But I know better, and I've let him see that. Whenever he takes on himself to try and make me do what he wants, I just tell him that he'd better right me first and then he can talk."

Lady Mills, listening to the hard, flip-pant voice, and looking into the coarse lines of old Frame's grand-daughter's face, seemed to feel and understand perfectly what measure Michael Chester had met with at her hands.

"Now he's trying a new tack," with another of those jarring laughs, and a self-conscious toss of her head. "I suppose he thinks he'll stop my tongue. He wants me to marry him. He asked me this evening, before I came here. But I said

if I couldn't do better than marry a poor workman like him I'd rather not marry at all. Grandfather meant me to be a lady. It's just a judgement on him if he's fallen in love with me, and I told him so."

Lady Mills looked at her as she sat bridling there with insufferable vanity and vulgar consciousness, the coarse prettiness of her face hardened into vindictive spite.

A grotesque fantasy struck her, as she gazed at her visitor with that keen, emotionless criticism which possessed her own senses at the moment, that if Fanny's soul could be laid bare it would be of the same hideous, crude blue as the glaring dress and bunch of drooping uncurled feathers. She shut her eyes for a second, as if the flaunting splotch of colour before her dazzled and hurt her physical sight, just as the grotesque horror, conjured up by her mental vision, set every possibility of her own soul shivering with disgust.

After Fanny had gone, Lady Mills went into her dressing-room.

She stopped before the dressing-table, looking at herself mechanically in the glass. As she saw her reflection she laughed aloud. No, even in her most ignorant days, that horror of a colour would have been impossible to her. And Michael Chester had known that.

"But perhaps he has grown to like it," she said, with an intensity of scorn that no one living soul should feel for another, seeing that the same cloak of humanity is worn by them both.

As she turned away, a faint fragrance rising from where her heedless feet had stood, aroused her attention.

On the carpet, crushed and bruised out of all their loveliness, lay some of Fanny's flowers.

A little later, her maid came to her with pale face and frightened eyes.

On returning to the dressing-room, she had missed a valuable diamond ring, which, through carelessness, she had failed to put away before going down to her supper.

Her face was full of suspicion of the common flower-girl.

There was an imperceptible pause. Then Lady Mills looked up from her book.

"It is all right," she said carelessly.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning, as Lady Mills sat writing her letters in the morning-room, close by the open French window, she heard a footstep with a slight halting tread,

coming down the gravelled pathway which passed the window.

She raised her head and listened. A few seconds later, Michael Chester, in his rough workman's clothes, appeared before the open window on his way to the side entrance of Mr. Brown's palatial mansion. She rose and uttered his name to prevent him going any further. She knew that he had come to see her.

"Mr. Chester," she said, smiling, "you have come to see me. Will you come in and speak to me here?"

He came in.

"I have come to make you a request," he said. He could speak quietly, for all night long he had been preparing himself to make it. "Fanny has told me how kind you have been to her. You seemed to have touched her and appealed to her as no one else has ever done; your being so far above her, has made your great kindness more—real to her. I have failed altogether—I can see perfectly to-day why," a shadow of remorseful misery and shame darkening his eyes.

"He has never got used to the blue," thought Lady Mills, but not flippantly.

"I have sometimes thought I was doing my best—instead of which I have only irritated and hurt her. I didn't understand her, you see——"

"It was the 'blue,'" thought Lady Mills again, "and he hates it still—and yet he is going to marry her—to see it flaunting and glaring before him all the days of his life."

Perhaps he felt something repellent in the gracious ease with which she listened, for he went on more quickly:

"I believe that unless some hand is held out to her, she will drift steadily downwards. She is going through some great crisis now. I saw it in her eyes last night, when I talked to her—after she came from you. Take her away with you for a time, out of this place where she is surrounded by associates against whose influence I am powerless, and save her from herself!"

He was pleading now with all his heart in his eyes, gathering up, if he could, all the sins of omission and indifference he had himself committed in his guardianship.

Lady Mills's eyes fell from his face to her hand, from which was missing the diamond ring of which her maid had spoken.

Fanny had stolen it. Lady Mills felt that she had every right to act as she had

resolved; only she was not conscious in her slowly kindling indignation that, with the ring, that posy of narcissus flowers flaunted in the blue dress was as inextricably mingled as good and evil in men's souls.

"I cannot do anything more for Fanny," she said coldly, rising as she spoke, "than what I promised last night. I shall be pleased to help her with any money; but I cannot take her into my house—to prepare her to be your wife," she added to herself.

"Your money will only send her quicker to ruin." He rose too, imperious, earnest. "You can and must do better for her than that."

"Really, Mr. Chester," with cold carelessness, "I do not see what right——"

Her heartless calm drove him out of himself, stirred to the depths of his being as he had already been by the struggle through which he had passed during the night before he could bring himself to come and ask this favour of her.

"Because you and yours have helped to make her what she is," he exclaimed. "You have marred her life as you blasted mine. Because your father robbed her as he robbed me. He stole the money her grandfather gave me to invest for her, as he stole my invention while I lay as good as dead that night in Mill Lane, beaten out of my senses by men who could only have heard from your lips that I should be passing that way at that hour of the evening, and while I lay there as good as dead your father crept into my room and stole my ideas, as he stole the money afterwards from the room where the dead lay. 'Brown's Patent'! It was my patent. My invention which I had perfected only that very day—the discovery I had been trying for years to make. I told Frame of it as he lay there dying. He had had some clue to what I was doing. He knew that I had no money to be able to profit by it, so he told me where to find some. He had hoarded it up—seven hundred pounds—hidden away under his hearth-stone. He believed in my discovery, and told me to take it when he was dead and use it—as an investment for Fanny, so that she might be rich one of these days. I knew I could promise to return it tenfold. And I came out of the hospital to find invention and money gone, and your father——"

Lady Mills raised her hand with an effort, turning her head slowly in the direction of the door.

Mr. Joseph Brown had just entered. He had heard the last fierce words poured out, regardless of all hearers, by the shabbily-clad workman, and for a second stood still, while the words fell about his ears like a pitiless hail of fire. As they broke off abruptly, checked by that mute appeal of the trembling woman's hand, he jerked himself forward, advancing with a jaunty air.

"My dear child!" he said, coming forward with that jaunty air which, though he did not know it, was perfectly unfamiliar to his general manner, "what is the matter?"

"Father," said Lady Mills, and she put her hands up to her white lips, as if she felt on them once more the blow that had silenced them that night nearly seven years ago. Its memory had never wholly died out between father and daughter. "He says you are a—thief, and that I helped you!"

"It's a lie—an infernal lie!" shouted Mr. Brown, his lips livid with rage or fear. "Patience!"

But she shrank away from him with a low, inarticulate cry, as that false note, which had jarred on her seven years before, struck and tortured her anew with its hideous discordance.

"Go away!" she said to Michael Chester, "if you have any pity."

He turned away without a word. He himself hardly conscious of more than one thing—the innocence of the woman he had despised and scorned all these years.

CHAPTER VI.

THAT evening he was coming down one of the streets in the slums of the town searching for Fanny, who had disappeared from the house of the woman with whom she boarded.

It was nearly ten o'clock, when he saw Lady Mills come out alone from one of the miserable tenement houses inhabited by all sorts and conditions of men and women.

"What are you doing here?" he asked hoarsely, stopping as she came down the broken steps into the street. A gas-lamp flared its flickering, yellow light just by them, and he saw that she had been crying, and her face was white and tired to death. "This is no place for you—alone—at this hour."

"I came to look for Fanny," she said. "She is here—all right. There is a good woman living in the house, and Fanny is

to stay with her till to-morrow, then she is going away with me."

On her hand flashed the diamonds for which poor Fanny had so nearly bartered her soul. With tears and passionate shame and remorse, the ring had been given back, as the girl's heart melted before the tender, earnest pleading of the woman who had come to her, in her guilt, as a sister.

"Will you let me see you safely out of this?" he asked. He did not thank her for her coming to Fanny; words on the subject would that moment have been a discord between them.

They walked on in silence; and as they went, the pride and arrogance, the petty, ignoble ambitions of her society life, the slowly increasing hardness of a heart striving to content itself within the narrow limits of the world of fashion, fell from her, as the hate, and the sullen apathy, and that bitter brooding over wrongs which turn a man's heart into his own hell, poisoning every good impulse in him, passed out of his life for ever.

They came out at last, beyond the sight and sound of that noisy, restless, human current, into a deserted square; and then they stopped and faced each other.

"I must tell you something," he said, "before you speak; and then you can go away without one word, if you choose, and you will be right to do so. That night—the evening of the day when I believed my fortune was made—I decided, as I walked out to Atkinson's Mill, that I would not see you again."

"Hush, I knew that," with a slight, sad smile. "I saw it in your face already, when you came out of the house, that the future would not be as the past. And yet—and yet—I wrote to beg you to come back to me," her pale face scarlet: "but when you sent back my letter——"

"Good Heaven!" he cried, staring at her.

"Oh!" Had her father's hand been stained with this sin, too?

And she had been so proud—so scornful of poor, gaudy, vulgar Fanny—so contemptuous of this man, at whose expense they had flourished!

"Why did you keep silence all these years?" she cried.

"Not out of pity, nor mercy, nor generosity," he said very bitterly. "You must know everything," as she made a gesture as if to stop him. "I would have spoken without an instant's ruth. There were moments when I felt like a devil; but

I was silent from sheer compulsion. No one but Frame, and he was dead, knew of my work. The story of that hoarded money would have been sufficient to condemn me. Was it likely that any man, dying or living, would have handed it over to another—a stranger, it might be said—to use for his own good, and leave his own flesh and blood to that stranger's tender mercies! I could not prove that the invention was mine before another had discovered it, and if I could have done so, another had patented it before me, and mine was practically valueless."

There was a silence. They stood under the shadow of the trees that fringed the great silent square. Though the lamps of dusty streets flared near them, they drew in with quickened breaths the sweet air of the spring night, while above them, shining down even into the turmoil and tumult of the town, was Heaven's eternal starlight.

"Michael," she said softly, "might it not be that but for all that past you and I might not be standing here facing each other to-night; that out of evil Heaven has brought its own good, and has given us to each other when we need each other most?"

"Patience!"

Mr. Joseph Brown made one more attempt at blustering anger.

His daughter said no word; but before the look in her beautiful sad eyes he quailed like a beaten cur.

The matter was never alluded to again; and Mr. Joseph Brown still lives and flourishes, generally envied and respected, on the proceeds of "Brown's Patent."

THE "THREE FISHES."

BY A. MOBERLY.

"By Reuben Parley" ran the legend over the lintel. The fishes swam symmetrically—or, on a field azure, undée—in the shield above the wide dark-timbered porch. The three golden tails flashed in the sunshine, so did the diamond-paned lattices, and the flickering leaves of the three tall poplars behind the house. The bright light brought out the strong reds of the irregular, spreading tiled roofs, the curtains of the lower windows, and the range of tall hollyhocks behind the cabbage rows of the garden; the dazzling whites of walls, chimney-pots, and Reuben Parley's shirts flapping on a line.

Beyond the inn green meadows stretched away into softest, bluest distance, and the river lay in shimmering links of silver. A cheerful stir pervaded the place; men and horses with all manner of vehicles were coming and going, smart dog-carts, barrows with donkeys, farm-carts, shandrydans, and a cycle or two. Reuben Parley himself, crimson-faced and perspiring, came out in his shirt-sleeves to get a breath of air as I reached the porch.

"Has the carrier left my luggage here?" I asked him.

"Name of Milburn, ma'am? Yes, ma'am. He said I were to give you a room if we had one to spare. I don't say but we're a bit crowded just now, to-morrow being the first day of Squire Fisherton's sale, and the farm stock and stables being on view to-day; but we'll get you a bedroom and a dinner. Missus! I say, missus! Here's the lady."

"Missus," a pale, anxious-faced woman in a limp gown, with a blue woollen shawl crossed over her chest, came out.

"It's but a poor place, ma'am. If you think you'd be more comfortable at the 'Royal Oak'——"

"The 'Royal Oak'! Just listen to her! A low little crib in a back lane! Why, of course the lady would rather make out with what we can give her for a night or two till one of our best bedrooms is vacant, than go to a pot-house."

"Let me see what you can do for me, at all events. I'm too old a traveller to mind roughing it."

"Show the lady, Jess—and no nonsense, mind. Coming, sir, coming!" He gave his wife a look, not unkind, but with a threat in it, and bustled off in answer to repeated calls from within.

Mrs. Parley looked at me plaintively, and then led me past the bar through certain crooked passages—oil-cloth and dark wainscot all shining with cleanliness and elbow-grease—to a doorway that opened on a yard at the back. To the left was a building with a loft above, up to which a stout ladder led.

"It's up there, ma'am," Mrs. Parley said deprecatingly. "It really ain't fit for a lady to occupy."

"I've slept in queerer places than any you can show me," I assured her, and scrambled up the ladder followed by her mild, unavailing protests.

Gaining the loft I was certainly at a loss to discover the sleeping accommodation, for it was crammed with sacks, hampers,

harness, and superannuated farm implements, and had, moreover, a great opening in the opposite wall looking out into a by-lane. However, my landlady, still apologetic, unlocked a door in a partition which divided the loft in half, and led the way into a fairly comfortable, tiny bedroom. To be sure, it was only possible to stand upright on one side of it, the roof sloping on the other side to within four feet of the floor; but it was spotlessly, dazzlingly clean, the boards scrubbed till they almost rivalled the fresh whitewash of the walls; a gay patchwork counterpane covered the truckle-bed; if there was but a low stool by way of wash-stand, the pitcher and basin were capacious; a mug of gillyflowers stood on the sill of the little window, and an antimacassar decorated the back of the one chair. What could woman want more? I was quite content, and I said so.

"Then I may send up your portmantau?" asked Mrs. Parley despondently. "It won't leave you much room."

"Plenty," said I, mounting on the bed to let her pass out; "especially if that great chest might be moved. That takes up half the room. Cannot it stand with the other things outside?"

Mrs. Parley's white face grew whiter, her lips worked tremulously.

"That chest, ma'am? No; oh, no! We mustn't move that," she answered, clutching nervously at the blue shawl at her throat. "I—I daren't. I gave my word—my solemn word, I did—to Ephraim that there it should stand till he came back to fetch it."

"But it spoils the room. What's in it?"

"We didn't ought to have let you this room, we didn't. It's Ephraim's—he's paid for it. But my husband, he is so masterful. There's good lodgings to be had, ma'am—Mrs. Jump—a widow, and most respectable——"

"Now, missus! Missus!" came Reuben's voice from below. "Be them chops to cook themselves, or are you a-coming?" and she scuffled off alarmedly, still murmuring:

"Not the place to put a lady in."

I followed, leisurely inspecting, and decided that I might very well put in a few days at the "Three Fishes." Mrs. Parley didn't want me, evidently—overworked as it was, possibly. She seemed but a poor, washed-out creature, but she would soon find that I was not an exacting

lodger. I meant to be out sketching all day, or to fish if I got the chance. My loft bedroom was at least cool and quiet, I infinitely preferred it to the rather stuffy house. I should stay.

I was engaged on a rather important piece of work just then. Last year I had contributed a number of illustrated articles, entitled "The Homes of Our Forefathers," to an American magazine. I had not dealt with mansions of the class of Chatsworth or Hatfield—their owners were too well known and their families too thoroughly accounted for to stand any liberties; but there are many imposing residences scattered up and down the country to which an American "first family" might be gratified to trace its origin, and I could always find a local tradition, a tablet in the parish church, or an entry in the register which would justify my title. Anyhow, the idea "caught on," as the editor was pleased to inform me with an order for three more sketches to complete an "édition de luxe" which he intended to bring out. I had secured a grim old Border tower with a ghastly legend, a moated grange in the Fen country, and had been recommended by a friend to try Fisherton. "There's no family there to speak of now, and you can say what you like about them. There's a Murillo worth looking at in the dining-hall, too."

So I set off to Fisherton Hall in high spirits, taking a peep on the way into a noble old thirteenth-century church, crowded with promising-looking monuments and brasses. It was a longer walk than I expected to the entrance, under the fierce blaze of the afternoon sun. The avenue was shady, but close and airless. It wound for about a quarter of a mile between thickets of overgrown shrubs, and ended at last in a huge disappointment. A modern façade, a stucco—actually stucco—portico, and a severe and scornful butler.

The Hall was not open to the public. The sale was at the Home Farm, if that was my business. Captain Fisherton had left positive orders that no "sketchers" was to be allowed in the grounds. If it had been "picnics" or "poachers," the contemptuous emphasis could not have been more marked. He wouldn't be argued with or cajoled, but bowed me off stiffly, and kept a suspicious eye on me to the turn of the avenue. I was disgusted and cast down, but not discouraged. See the Hall I would, and the Murillo too!

I turned sharp off by the lodge, and

followed the enclosure of the park in search of a possible chance of trespassing. Half a mile of high wall, then a length of newly-tarred paling with spiky nails atop, then barbed wire fencing. I tramped on past the village and out on the river meadows beyond. Always the barbed wire, except at points where haply a view of the house might be gained through breaks in the trees, when up rose the envious tarred paling as before. At last another length of stone wall. The river evidently crossed the park, and issued here from under a low wide arch. It was shrunken by long drought to a thin thread of water between banks of decaying water-weed and stones, but in ordinary seasons it must have filled the arch almost to its crown, as I could see by the green-stained stone. I could see under the arch—I could pass under the arch! Off went shoes and stockings forthwith, and I was scrambling from the top of one big stone to the next, bruising my toes, and greening my shoulders on the low arch, but passing through, and in the Forbidden Land.

It was so easy, so absurdly easy, that I wondered no precautions had been taken to bar the entrance, but, as they told me afterwards, such an exceptionally dry season had not been known for years. I scrambled up the bank into a thicket of rhododendrons and azaleas, and looked about me. It was well worth the venture. A fortified building of some kind had evidently once stood alone on its little hill, and to it succeeding generations had made their additions, each building on a lower level than the last, and always on the southern slope, till the beautiful, confused, irregular mass stretched down to the water's edge, where it ended in a stately building, with great oriel windows looking on a terrace from which a flight of steps descended to the water. A flush of late autumn roses smothered the steps and balustrade and was reflected in the river, which had been here dammed up so as to form a tiny lakelet, on which a gondola floated. I should have liked to sit to work on it there and then, but the sun was sinking fast, and I had an unknown path to travel, so I marked the spot for to-morrow's sketch, and made my way out as I had entered.

High tea awaited me at the "Three Fishes," a generous meal, including chops, eggs and bacon, griddle-cakes, honey, and apple-tart with cream, served in Mrs. Purley's little room behind the bar. I was hungry and pleasantly tired out by the

long hot day, so I did full justice to the fare, and then prepared to go to bed with the birds, begging to be called by the first person stirring next morning.

"That'll be me, ma'am," said Mr. Parley. "Will five o'clock suit you? Now, missus, what are you after? You ain't a-going to carry up that can of hot water! Give it here; I'll take it up for the lady. She's got a weak heart, she have," he continued confidentially to me as we crossed the yard in the soft summer twilight. "When you want anything, please give me or the girl a call."

I assented, and having got him safe in the loft, attacked him directly.

"Now you're here, Mr. Parley, won't you help me to move that chest out? It takes up a quarter of the room."

Reuben's jolly face grew solemn.

"Can't be done, ma'am," he said regretfully, shaking his head. "I'd be glad enough to see the last of it, Heaven knows. But then there's the missus. It 'ud be the death of her. She thinks herself bound to that Ephraim to keep it till he comes again; and him dead and drowned these ten years! There's no reasoning with her."

"Who's Ephraim, and what did he keep in it?"

"Eph were my brother. Not as I were proud of the relationship—not at all. He was a sailor first, and then a sort of servant to Mr. Norris Fisherton when he went exploring in Africa. Mr. Norris, he were brother to Captain Fisherton—the Squire as now is—and, similarly, the Captain weren't particularly proud of him. They came back again like a pair of bad pennies, and hung about here a bit, and I don't deny I was glad to see the last of them both. One day, before he went, I come into his room and I see that chest."

"'Why, whatever do you want with that thing,' says I, 'unless it's a bargain in coffins you've been picking up cheap!'"

"He turned on me that savage, I thought his knife would be into me."

"'I've been getting something with a good lock that will keep your wife's meddling fingers out of my goods while I'm away,' was all he said, and begins a-shoving his traps in—just old clothes and some bits of curiosities he'd brought home. When we heard of his end I says: 'I'm his next heir; I'll clear that rubbish out for what it'll fetch.' But missus began to scream out like mad. She'd vowed to Ephraim to keep that chest sacred, and I don't know what else. 'Have it your own

way,' says I at last. 'Let the old lumber lie.' She wanted me to keep the room sacred as well as the chest; but that were a trifle too strong. I don't deny that we were unlucky——"

He pulled himself up short and bade me a hasty good-night.

I regarded that chest with strong disfavour as I prepared for bed. It was like a coffin or one of those metal-lined dress-cases for India, strong and solidly made, with a lid fitting so closely that it might be air-tight. It had only a small key-hole, but was secured by a thick tarred rope firmly knotted round it, passing through the heavy iron handles on each side, and sealed here and there with great red blotches of wax. On one of them I thought I made out a coat-of-arms bearing the three fishes.

Ephraim's sacred trust! Ephraim's old clothes and bits of curios! How much would the moths have left of them by this time! There must have been something of more value in it that Reuben knew nothing of; or why did he seal it up? Was it heavy? I caught the big handle and put all my strength into a pull. I could move it easily enough, but it groaned dismally, and there came a muffled rattle from within that made me drop the handle with a nervous start.

Bah! Crockery, cutlery, African ivory, or diamonds, what business was it of mine? He was hoarding small treasures towards the fitting up of a little home of his own when he gave up the sea, and couldn't trust his sister-in-law with the handling of them. And now he was drowned, poor fellow! I made up a whole story to account for Ephraim and the box, and almost forgave him before I blew out my candle and closed my eyes.

But not a wink of comfortable sleep would Ephraim let me have that night. Scarce had I dropped off when I heard him—I could swear—dragging the chest softly across the room. I heard him breathe hard as he undid the knots. I heard the clink of the hasp in the lock. Time after time I found myself sitting bolt upright in bed, with staring eyes striving to pierce the gloom of the corner at the foot of my bed where the chest stood. Then a fresh fantasy arose in my brain. I made out the dark outline against the whitewashed wall, and, as I watched, the lid seemed to rise softly—softly; and I sat trembling from head to foot, the damp streaming down my forehead, wait-

ing to see something—I knew not what—come out. This was intolerable! I sprang out of bed and walked straight to the window past the thing. A wan old moon was setting behind a bank of ragged black cloud. I stared at it till I began to feel drowsy, then made for my bed once more. As I passed the chest, in a fit of childish anger I struck it sharply with my fist. Again that muffled rattle answered me, and I sat down on my bed-foot seized with an utterly unreasoning, ghastly panic, like a cold clutch on my heart. There was some nameless horror within reach of me—something that was living and stirring within that chest. I could hear it scratching and scraping, trying to escape. I could hear muffled breathings and choking gasps. I flung myself on the thing with a sort of frenzy, and tore at the cords. The knots were too skilfully tied. I only got my finger-tips rasped for my pains. I struck it again, violently and viciously this time. Not a sound in reply. Then I seized the handle, resolved to put it out at all hazards. Dragging with all my force I caught my foot in a crack in the boards, slipped and fell, striking my head against the wall. How long I lay there stunned I never knew; but when I came to my senses the welcome morning light was streaming in upon me. I thankfully staggered to my feet, splashed myself well with cold water, and dressed. Two sleepy-headed farm boys were clinking across the yard with their pails towards the cowshed, and at the kitchen door stood Mr. Purley, on the look-out for me, as I was conscious.

"Hillo, ma'am! I were a-coming to call you. Had a good night?"

Some demon of contrariness urged me to reply: "Ob, capital!" which I became aware astonished him pleasantly.

"Why, a-coorse you did. Missus, here's the lady as fresh as paint. The room done her no harm."

Mrs. Purley, kneeling before a crackling fire of sticks, on which she was balancing the coffee-pot, looked round fearfully over her shoulder.

"Glad to hear it, ma'am," she replied, with a deep sigh.

The coffee smelt so good that I begged to be allowed to join them at breakfast, and by the time I had demolished several slices of cold boiled ham and delicious country bread, the sun was up and the village awake and stirring. I returned to my loft light-heartedly to collect the re-

quisites for my expedition, to which the touch of lawlessness gave an additional charm. I had solved the mystery of the night's terrors, Mrs. Purley having confessed that for my better entertainment last night she had made my tea with two good spoonfuls of green in the pot; enough, in conjunction with the unusually heavy meal, to raise a legion of bogies at any time for me.

I found the river lower than on the previous day, and had no difficulty in conveying myself and my goods to the spot I had chosen on the bank of the ornamental water opposite the house. I worked my will on Fisherton Hall that day. I sketched it in pencil, and I sketched it in water-colour; I made careful studies of the details, and when the sun got too high, I went exploring happily along the edge of the river till I reached the point where it first entered the park. Then I sat down on a fallen tree in a nest of bracken, and devoured the sandwiches Mrs. Purley had put up for me. Then I waded across the river and walked back to the house.

In ordinary seasons there was no way of reaching the terrace except from the house or the lake, the water covering the lowest steps to the depth of several feet. To-day I could get to them by crossing a yard or two of mud and gravel. They were a mass of damp green weed, slippery and treacherous; away went my feet from under me on the first step, and down I came ignominiously. I got up again unhurt, except where my left hand, on which I had fallen rather heavily, had been cut by some sharp edge under the green slime—a stone or piece of glass. I dug it out and examined it. A bit of metal, oval-shaped. I poked the dirt out of it and saw it was a kind of ring; finally I washed it and gave it a rub with my paint-rag, and it came out yellow—gold, possibly, by its weight—a scarf-ring of an eccentric pattern, an owl, or maybe a cherub's head between two outspread wings. I wondered who had dropped it there, and pocketed it—provisionally. I made my way fearlessly up to the terrace, and peered in at the great oriel window. It looked into a stately dining-room, with marvels of black oak carving in the high chimney-piece and the great unfurnished buffet. The room was dismantled and evidently unused, so I gazed my fill, and found hanging opposite me a brown masterpiece that was unmistakably the Murillo. When I had made all the notes I needed I found my way up

through the gardens to the old ruin, and after more sketching returned, hot, tired, and contented, by the way I had entered, to the outer world.

Business had been good at the "Three Fishes" to-day. Mrs. Parley seemed hardly able to drag one foot after another, and Reuben mopped his crimson brow as he ran from bar to stables keeping his staff up to their work. The first day's sale was over, but a few choice lots were reserved till to-morrow morning, and there was no chance of another room for me to-night. I didn't care; in fact, I preferred my present quarters. Reuben seemed personally gratified by my decision.

"Glad to hear you say so, ma'am. I don't hold with the missus's queer fads about that room. Why, if you haven't got Fisherton Hall there as like as life! And Lady Jane's window!"

I looked up eagerly, scenting a family legend.

"Who was Lady Jane?"

"Well, she were the last of the real old Fishertons, now that her husband were dead—cousins they were, you see. And that were the identical window she disappeared out of. There's a tablet in the church to her, same as if she were dead. You see, she couldn't abide them other Fishertons, all except Mr. Norris—comin', sir, comin'," and off went Reuben, leaving me athirst for "copy."

He came in presently, and sat down by my invitation in the big chair by the open window, pipe in hand, to have his portrait taken while "the missus" took his place in the bar.

"Please tell me all you can about Lady Jane," I begged him; but his first sentence shivered my romance to atoms.

"Lady Jane? Well, she were a smart old lady of eighty-five or upwards when I see her; shrunken and bent, but as active on her feet as a girl. Mr. Cobb, the last butler, used to look in here of a Tuesday evening regular, and he says her spite again the Captain—the Squire as now is—was wonderful. The Hall was hers, you see, as long as she lived, and all the heirlooms, picturer, and diamonds, and plate; and she used to say she'd live to a hundred, so as to keep him out of them; and they do say as she disappeared out of pure spite, so as they never could prove her death. She used to have the grand gold plate set out every night, and come down to dinner in all the diamonds, and have Mr. Cobb and the two men waiting

on her, just as if there were a regular party. Well, one night, when they took in coffee as usual, the room was empty. Mr. Cobb looked on the terrace, but she wasn't there. Some walnuts which she had been peeling was on her plate, and her gloves and fan lay beside them, but no sign of Lady Jane anywhere. Then he called the maid, and they searched the house and then the grounds, but she wasn't either in or out, and if she had been out she must have died—poor old lady! That was the night of the great storm, when the big elm across the lane was split, and the stable roof blown off. Next day Captain Fisherton came down from London, and called us all out to help him to search. I went—it was pouring bucketsful, I remember, and half the country under water—but high nor low could we find a trace of Lady Jane."

"She must have been murdered," I pronounced; "murdered for her diamonds."

"So the police said, but they couldn't prove it. Robbers weren't likely to leave all that beautiful gold plate on the table. And, besides, how were they to have got in?"

"Just as I did to-day."

Reuben gave a low whistle of astonishment when I related my exploit, and looked meditative.

"What had Mr. Norris to do with her?" I asked, to wake him up again.

"That was just a bit of her spite, too. When he came back here, and the Captain wouldn't have anything to say to him, she gave him two hundred pounds to make another start, and put him down in her will for ten thousand if he behaved himself—as a sort of reward for annoying the family, Mr. Cobb says."

"What became of him?"

Mr. Parley pointed solemnly with his pipe-stem to the floor.

"Went to Davy Jones. Him and Eph—and a good job too," he added by way of postscript to the epitaph. "If they'd have lived a week or two longer there's no telling what might have been said. Why—I am blessed!"

Reuben's eyes were fixed in a wide stare on the scarf-ring which I had tumbled out on the table with my knife and indiarubber. I tossed it across to him.

"Do you know that?"

"Ephraim's, by George! Pawned it at Mistleton when he first came home, and took it out the day he left with some money as Mr. Norris gave him."

"Then you'd better keep it. I picked it up on the terrace steps under Lady Jane's window."

Reuben's jolly face was incapable of turning pale, so deeply ingrained was its tint; but it mottled all over and his jaw dropped, not all at once, but by degrees.

"S'posing the missus should have been right all along?" I heard him whisper huskily to himself. He took up the ring gingerly, his hand shaking, and turned it over and over in his broad palm. It seemed to offer a problem too intricate for him to solve. Finally, under pretext of being wanted in the bar, he left me, not to return.

I bid defiance to Ephraim and all his works to-night, and piled his chest with my sketching tools, fishing tackle, and waterproof. I had supped early and moderately, and was dead sleepy. My eyes closed as my head touched the pillow, and as they closed the visions of the past night, like evil birds of darkness, seemed to arise and gather over me. All the horrors came back multiplied and intensified a thousand-fold, for I knew myself to be sleeping and powerless against them. I tried to wake. I insisted on waking as before I had insisted on sleeping, and the church clock booming out "One" helped me to break the spell. I woke, I was convinced; but where was I? The Murillo hung opposite me across a table covered with massive gold plate, and lighted by clusters of wax lights. Liveried servants waited on me, offering dishes which I could not taste. The great oriel window behind me was open to the hot sultry night, and through the darkness I could hear the tread of soft footsteps coming up from the water, and I knew it was Death who was nearing me. Then I called to my serving-men to make fast the window against him; but my voice gave no sound. The steps came nearer and always nearer, and I called to the men to stay by me and protect me; but my voice gave no sound and they left me alone. And I knew who was entering, but could not cry out nor stir; and something black fell over me, blinding and choking, and the clutch of Death was on my throat. I fought and struggled, but was borne away; and with the splash of water mingled with hideous threats and curses in my ears I awoke at last.

I could bear it no longer. An angry dawn was breaking in the east, so I up and dressed, and tramped far afield with

no aim or purpose but to put as many miles as I could between me and my terrors. It was high noon ere I returned—dusty, weary, and with a ghost-ridden look which I felt must be seen of all. Luckily, the "Three Fishes" was too busy to spare any notice for me, so I fed and dressed again and set off to discover some means of getting away as soon as might be. Not a vehicle was to be had, of course, and the carrier didn't travel till next morning. Well, I might stay if another room was to be had; but not a day longer. Meanwhile, I went to see the church, as the one spot with possibilities of coolness, and, sitting in the Squire's pew copying the inscription on the tablet to Lady Jane, I incontinently fell asleep amongst the Squire's comfortable cushions, and was only awakened by the old sexton taking a look round before locking up.

I came out at the west door into a world aflame with crimson light. A fiery sun was disappearing behind dense masses of black cloud. An unnatural stillness reigned—no twitter of birds, nor rustle of leaves. The lurid glow turned the gold of the "Three Fishes" to copper. The stables were shut, the yard swept, tidy, and deserted. The house was still with the quiet of exhaustion; evidently the sale was over and the customers departed. I made my way into the silent kitchen, where the tiles were damp with fresh scrubbing, and the fire, kept down to the smallest handful that would keep a kettle on the boil, shone reflected in a burnished row of unused tins. Mrs. Parley, sitting near the hearth in an old-fashioned rocking-chair, clicking her knitting-needles softly in the half-light, looked up as I entered, pleased to see me. The "blue bedroom" was in readiness for me, she said, also a sitting-room. I declined the latter, and sat down in the wide window-seat watching her white face coming and going as she rocked. Every lattice was open to catch what air there was, but none of the everyday sounds came in.

"The storm is near," she spoke out of the gloom. "It will be awful when it comes—just what it was this time ten years."

"When Lady Jane disappeared, and Ephraim's ship was lost. Do their ghosts walk, do you think? They gave me a bad time last night."

I spoke laughingly, but she dropped the sock on her knee, and her face grew whiter.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I told Reuben so," she moaned, beating her hands on her knees. "He would have it. You're the third. There was the boy and poor Bessy, and now you. We didn't ought to put a Christian there."

"Look here," I said, leaning forward, "do you know what's in that chest?"

"Oh, no, no!" she shrieked. "I'll swear I never opened it! I'll tell you how it was, ma'am. We were doing well before Ephraim came home. All the gentlefolks about had a good word to say for us. Every stall in the stable was filled in the hunting season, and on market days we had more than we could take in; but Reuben wasn't satisfied. He wanted to build those new stables, and he borrowed the money from Lawyer Sharp, and it came to more than he thought; and not a night could he sleep easy in his bed for wondering how we should pay it all. I was glad to see Ephraim at first, for I thought he might divert his brother's mind—a bit rough he was, through living in them countries among the blacks, but no harm. But that Mr. Norris, oh, he was a bad one! Lor', what doings used to come out when they sat over the fire with their pipes at night! I couldn't tell you, ma'am; it just made me sick to hear them. Reuben got vexed when I put my hands over my ears and ran away. He said they only made them up to frighten me, but I knew better. Reuben, you see, was dazzled a bit by all the talk of gold-dust, and ivory, and diamonds that Ephraim was so free with—not that he or Mr. Norris had got much good out of them. Eph were in rags when he first came home, and Mr. Norris was just hanging about to get what he could out of Lady Jane. No one knows all them two had been up to! They was afraid of one another, they was. Ephraim would stop in his talk when Mr. Norris gave him a look, and yet whatever Mr. Norris got out of Lady Jane, Ephraim took the half of it. He came to me with fifty pounds one day and said I might have it till he came back from sea. 'It's rent for my room, and I shall take the key away with me,' says he. I was that thankful to get the money and see the last of them, I was ready to promise whatever he asked—not to set foot in that room, or let any one else do so."

The sun had disappeared now, only an angry glow flushed the west above the crowding black clouds. Mrs. Parley sat

with her eyes fixed on it, the words coming as if by some constraint.

"I promised; but that weren't enough. Ephraim made me swear—me, a decent woman, to use such words!—and Reuben were that masterful he wouldn't heed a word I told him. And we broke the promise, we did, and brought Ephraim back from his grave under the sea. I saw him—sure as I'm a living woman—Eph, with his big red beard, and his shiny coat, and his sailor's cap, kneeling on that chest and pulling at the ropes as I seen him do it afore. Not a drop of rain had been on the ground for weeks, but his coat was dripping, and I saw the wet marks of his great sea-boots on the boards. It was salt water, ma'am, and the sea had given up its dead."

"Did it speak to you?" I asked, in a quiver with half-formed suspicion and excitement.

"Speak? I should have died! I daredn't wait for him to turn and look at me with those dead eyes; I crept away to hide in the loft, and there came a flash of lightning that filled the place, and I saw, staring in at the window, Mr. Norris Fisherton's own wicked face all afire. Next minute came a clap of thunder like the Day of Judgement, and they vanished."

"Did Mr. Purley see them?"

"How could he, and it club day at Mistleton, same as to-day, and he not coming back till midnight? He found me in a dead faint, and the door of that room fast locked as when Ephraim had left it."

It was pitchy black now, and a curious shrill sighing filled the air outside, while a lost little wind moaned and piped in the chimney.

"And a curse came with Ephraim's money," she went on excitedly. "Mr. Mayne gave up the hounds, and they went away to the other side of the county; and the carrier began to go by the new Mistleton road, and the 'Three Fishes' went down—down!"

"If we'd but have waited, and never touched that money! Fifty pounds came to me from Aunt Susan's will just a month after—clean, honest money. But Ephraim's gone where I can never pay him, and the money and the curse sticks to us. Oh, oh!" She threw up her arms and fell a-sobbing, while the first heavy drop of the thunder-storm splashed on the dusty path.

I got up to search for a light; it was too terrible to sit and listen to her sobs in

the darkness. They ceased suddenly, and I felt her clutch my arm.

"Look, look! The loft! He's there!" she cried hoarsely. I looked through the open kitchen door to where a faint light glimmered and flickered. "And Reuben and me locked that room up safe when we'd got your things out," she moaned.

I shook her off and stepped resolutely out into the yard. I think she dreaded more being left to herself than anything she expected to see, for she threw her gown over her head and followed, holding tight to my skirt. We climbed the ladder silently. The room door was open, sure enough, and something moving inside. On the sloping whitewashed ceiling I saw the shadow of a big man—a man in a sailor's cap, with a wide, rough beard. I was hampered by Mrs. Purley, who hung limp on my arm, and I was infected by her terrors. I drew back amongst the loft lumber and watched the shadow fearfully. It disappeared at last, and a dark form filled the doorway; a man bending under the weight of a chest—Ephraim's. It passed us, making for the opening to the road.

A wild shriek burst from Mrs. Purley: "Ephraim! Ephraim!" and a flash of lightning, vivid, blinding, sulphureous, filled the loft, in which I saw, clear as in daylight, the figure, red-bearded, clad in an oilskin coat from which the water ran in streams, and with high sea-boots that left great wet footmarks as he trod. The next moment all was blackness, and there burst over our heads with a mighty roar the first thunder-clap, shaking the building to its foundations. The floor rocked and heaved, the roof split open to the sky, and the next flash showed us Ephraim's room crumbling away from our very feet into a ruined heap of bricks, mortar, beams, and tiles. The great scathed elm across the lane had fallen upon it and crushed it.

The morning rose calm and clear. The hollyhocks and sunflowers lay prone, but the cabbage-rows glittered brave in rain-

drops, and the three fishes curled their well-washed golden tails in the sun. The meadows lay like a wide lake, with the little river drowned at the bottom.

I was standing in the porch with my possessions waiting for the carrier, when Reuben came sheepishly out to wish me good-bye.

"Mr. Purley! Come here directly, and tell me, how could you play such a trick! You might have frightened your wife to death."

"Not she! Bless you, she's happier in her mind than she's been this ten years. 'Ephraim's got his own,' says she." He shook with internal laughter. "It all came out beautiful, didn't it, ma'am! I'd had that dodge in my mind ever since I came across those old togs of Ephraim's in a bundle in the loft; but it wasn't till you found that scarf-ring that I made up my mind that something ought to be done," he ended seriously.

"Tell me"—in a whisper—"what has become of the chest?"

"You've a right to know, ma'am. Well, it's up there," and he jerked his thumb towards the corner of the churchyard just visible at the end of the road. The carrier's white horse came jogging round it as I looked. "Samuel Sprowle, the sexton, as you may have heard on, he's my uncle and Ephraim's, and I put it to him what was to be done. He's got a grave to dig to-day—a family one—and a foot or so deeper makes no great odds to him. So there it will go, and you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that the Burial Service will be read over it, and a stone put up at its head, quite respectable, poor thing. But," said Reuben, his honest face darkening with a threatening scowl, "if ever them two villains—as never sailed in the 'Nancy Bell'—ever shows their faces here again they may look out; for I'll dig it up and I'll hang them." And he meant it.

The cart stopped. He put my goods in, and then myself. The white horse gave a lurch forward, and I saw the last of the "Three Fishes."

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CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
MISS KETURAH	1	A MIDSUMMER BIRTHDAY. A POEM	37
BLACKMAIL	10	JOYCE MELBUSH'S MISDOINGS	37
THE SECOND PLACE	18	CAUGHT IN A LEVANTER	45
JIM GODDART'S PROMISE	29	GOOD-BYE TO SUMMER	53

MISS KETURAH.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

CHAPTER I.

IT was about eight o'clock on a cold, wet evening in January. There was nothing in the least unusual about the appearance of the streets of London on this particular evening, but to the occupant of a certain four-wheel cab which was jolting slowly westward they evidently presented an aspect of turbulence and danger that was little short of terrific. She was a little old lady, and she sat motionless on the extreme edge of the seat, clinging with one hand to a little old-fashioned reticule, and with the other to a bird-cage, gazing out of the window with her blue eyes round with alarm, and now and again ejaculating under her breath: "Oh, dear me! Oh, dear me!" She was driven right across London; at Piccadilly Circus she gave herself up for lost and shut her eyes tightly, still sitting bolt upright and clinging to her reticule and her bird-cage, unable to articulate the "Oh, dear me!" which formed itself upon her lips; and, finally, in a smart street in Kensington the cab came to a standstill.

A little gasp came from the little old lady as the cab stopped. But it was not a gasp of relief.

"Oh, dear me!" she murmured under her breath. "Oh, dear me!" And there was something piteous about the little whisper which nobody heard. Then it seemed to occur to her that it behooved her to get out; she did so accordingly in

considerable agitation and with some difficulty—the latter mainly occasioned by her unwillingness to trust to the cabman the contents of either hand—and stood upon the doorstep, her eyes fixed upon the door, her face working nervously. The door was opened almost immediately.

"Oh, dear me!" gasped the old lady. "I—hope it's the right house. I—I—am Miss Keturah Brown. Mrs. Forsyth? Oh!"

Behind the parlour-maid, who had opened the door, another woman had appeared, an elderly woman, also a servant evidently, but without cap or apron.

"Quite right, ma'am," she said quickly and reassuringly. "Will you please to walk in." She made an attempt as she spoke to relieve the old lady of the bird-cage, but Miss Keturah Brown clung to her burden evidently in all unconsciousness.

"Oh, thank you," she said nervously. "Yes, thank you. There's—there's the luggage and the man! What should I—what is—would five shillings—?"

"If you will walk in, ma'am," said the elderly servant, "Jane will settle with the man. You must be tired and cold, I am sure!"

She moved as she spoke, and the old lady, as though too much agitated and alarmed for resistance, followed her down the bright, luxurious hall until they came to an open door which led into a dining room, small but perfectly appointed. There was a brilliant fire burning, and the table was daintily laid for one person.

"Oh, dear me!" faltered the old lady as she glanced timidly about her.

As she stood there in the soft light of the shaded lamp, in the midst of such luxuriously modern appointments, it was not surprising that Miss Keturah Brown was regarded by the woman who had followed her with eyes of respectfully concealed amazement. She was a very little, thin, old lady, and the black skirt which she wore was full all round, clearing the ground at the back as at the front. It was surmounted by a black cloth jacket, innocent of shape, over which again she wore a small Shetland shawl neatly folded to a cross-over. Her bonnet was of a large "coal-scuttle" shape, scantily adorned with a black ribbon, and amply provided at the back with curtain and in front with bonnet-cap. Her little trembling hands were concealed in black silk gloves several sizes too large for her.

"My mistress wished me to say, ma'am, how sorry she was that she could not receive you herself. Dinner will be ready for you directly, and I am to do everything in my power to make you comfortable!"

The alarmed blue eyes had desisted in their instinctive movement round the room as the woman spoke, and they glanced as if involuntarily from the speaker to the dinner-table.

"I—it is most—I am—greatly obliged!" said the little old lady hurriedly. "It is truly kind. But—dinner?"

The accent with which the faltering voice enunciated the last word clearly proclaimed a first introduction to the ceremony of late dinner, and the ghost of a smile touched the woman's face.

"Mrs. Forsyth thought that you would be hungry after travelling all day," she said discreetly.

"Mrs. Forsyth is—did I understand you to say that Mrs. Forsyth was—out?" hesitated the old lady apprehensively.

"She is at the theatre," answered the woman, with a glance of surprise.

The faintest shade of pink, the difficult wintry flush of age, stole into the old lady's cheeks. "Oh, dear me!" she murmured. "Yes, to be sure. Oh, dear me!"

"You would like to come to your room at once, ma'am?" said the woman. "You must feel very tired coming such a long way!"

But the woman, as she led the way upstairs, had no idea what was indeed the distance which the little old lady had traversed that day. In the past twelve

hours Miss Keturah Brown had journeyed, figuratively speaking, from one world to another.

All the years of Miss Keturah Brown's life had been lived in a remote little country town, where the narrow staidness of the most rigid Calvinism had dominated the very atmosphere. One by one all the members of her family had laid down their quiet, precise lives, and passed away into the quiet, precise churchyard, until Miss Keturah and one brother alone were left. A year before the wet January night that brought the little old lady to London this brother also had died; and before Miss Keturah had fairly settled down to her lonely life, another "disposition," as she herself expressed it, fell upon her. She lost all her little property, and found herself practically penniless. It was at this juncture that she received a letter, signed "Diana Forsyth," in which the writer, after proving a distant relationship between herself and her correspondent through a certain renegade offshoot of the Brown family, who had gone to London and devoted himself to art, proceeded to offer the forlorn old lady a home. "I am a widow," the letter said, "and it seems a pity we shouldn't keep each other company, doesn't it?" Mrs. Forsyth lived in London, and was vaguely understood to be "worldly." But there was worse even than this: Mrs. Forsyth was an actress. Exactly what the term conveyed to Miss Keturah Brown and her friends it would be difficult to define; the conception it involved was as vague as it was horrifying. But the little old lady's first impulse was one of dismayed refusal. Finally, however, on discovering a subscription on foot among her grim old friends—none of whom had any money to spare—to save her from the only other alternative which presented itself, the workhouse, she made up her mind that it was her duty to accept Mrs. Forsyth's offer.

Two hours after her agitated arrival in Mrs. Forsyth's house, the old lady, considerably refreshed physically by the dainty little meal which had filled her soul with perturbation, was sitting alone in the drawing-room. It was a charming room, a little eccentric in its picturesque arrangement; such a room, in short, as Miss Keturah Brown had never seen; and she surveyed it now and again with much nervous foreboding in her eyes. She had removed all traces of her journey with scrupulous neatness. The short full skirt she wore now

was of worn black silk, as was the singular little jacket-like bodice. A little white shawl, fine as a cobweb, draped her shoulders, and she wore a white cap, not unlike a muslin nightcap. This was tied under her chin with narrow white ribbon, and from it there floated down on either side of her face lace streamers. Her face, now that rest and quiet had removed its excessive agitation, was singularly unwrinkled, withered though it was, and smooth bands of soft grey hair appeared beneath her cap border. Her little old hands, adorned with several mourning rings, held a grim-looking volume of sermons. She had emerged from her bedroom clasping this volume in her hand as though it presented itself as some sort of barrier between herself and the unknown by which she was surrounded. By-and-by, however, the book slipped into her lap, and her head, which had been nodding for some time, fell gently back against her chair. The suggestion offered by the elderly maid that she would not of course wait for Mrs. Forsyth's return had been scouted by her with gentle dignity. As she herself would have expressed it, she knew what was becoming under the circumstances, and nothing would have induced her to retire for the night until she had made her acknowledgements to her unknown hostess. But she was very tired, nevertheless, and having once succumbed to her drowsiness, she slept soundly. She did not hear the front door open with a latch-key at last, nor did she hear the sound of footsteps; she did not hear the drawing-room door open, or a man's voice say "By Jove!"

He was a tall, fair man in evening dress; he had come into the room with two ladies, and as the trio paused, another step came quickly up the stairs and a third woman appeared—a woman who looked little more than a girl, with bright auburn hair and laughing grey eyes. She, too, stopped short as she saw Miss Keturah.

"Oh, what a dear little old lady!" she exclaimed. Then, with a half-laughing softness on her mobile face, she advanced into the room and Miss Keturah woke.

She must have been dazed with sleep still, however, for instead of rising in prim trepidation to receive her hostess, as she would certainly have done had she been herself, she simply sat up and stretched out both her hands towards Mrs. Forsyth.

"Oh, you pretty creature!" she said.

CHAPTER II.

"BUT your baptismal name—I am truly sorry, my dear, to have to say it—your baptismal name has such a sadly unchristian sound!"

"Call me Di, then, my quaint Keturah! You can consider it the short for Dinah—and Dinah is Scriptural, isn't it?"

The words were uttered with a singularly sweet and delighted laugh, which robbed even the address of any shade of offence, and made it simply charming.

A fortnight had passed since Miss Keturah's arrival in London. The scene was the sunny little room assigned to her for a sitting-room. It was furnished with the quaint old furniture which had belonged to Miss Keturah's parents, and there was a certain bare and severe neatness about it which is peculiarly characteristic of the type of character to which Miss Keturah's family had belonged. Every inanimate object in the room was in perfect harmony with Miss Keturah's little old-world figure as she sat in her arm-chair by the fire. And the only other occupant of the room gave the finishing touch to the picture by adding to it the daring charm of contrast.

Mrs. Forsyth was standing by the fireplace leaning one arm on the mantelpiece, and looking down into Miss Keturah's face with eyes of infinite entertainment and delight. She was dressed in some kind of fresh delicate morning-gown of pale green, and her changing, bewildering beauty was modern in every line; modern, not in any sense of conventionality, but as being instinct with the spirit of the day. "Conventional," indeed, was just the word of all others which it was impossible to think of in connection with Diana Forsyth. She had been erratic, wilful, and enchanting from her childhood. The renegade Brown had been well treated by the art he had chosen to serve. He had been a successful painter, and his only child, motherless from her birth, had never known an ungratified wish. She had married at eighteen—for a freak, her father declared—a man much her senior. Her husband had left her a widow only a year after their marriage, and the death of her father a little later left her alone in the world. She travelled for two years, and then electrified her friends, first by announcing her intention of going on the stage, and then by developing genius in her suddenly adopted profession.

Miss Keturah looked up into her face for a moment with eyes in which bewilderment and fascination were blended with a haunting consciousness of the terrible "worldliness" of the woman before her.

"Di!" she murmured faintly. "Oh, dear me! I don't think—Di is so—so——"

"Well, it mustn't be Mrs. Forsyth!" said the owner of the unchristian name, with pretty imperiousness. "And Cousin Forsyth is quite paralysing to think of."

She let herself sink into the stiff old arm-chair which faced Miss Keturah, on the other side of the fire, clasping her hands behind her head as she fixed her eyes again on the little old lady.

"Where did you get your own delicious name?" she demanded.

The amusement in her eyes was so tender as to make her vaguely bewitching to Miss Keturah, and it was quite an effort to the latter to remember how reprehensible was the ignorance of Scripture displayed in the question.

"My love, you are forgetting," she said, with a little assumption of severity, before which the beautiful lips of Diana trembled slightly with laughter; "we read of Keturah in the Book of Genesis. One of the—the—wives of the patriarch Abraham was so called!"

Miss Keturah paused a moment; her eyes were resting on the lovely womanly figure opposite her, and apparently the sight touched a faint chord in her being overlaid even in her youth by the atmosphere in which she had lived. Almost as though involuntarily, and with a touch of consciousness which was almost pathetic in the innocent retrospect which it implied, she added:

"I remember once, when I was a young girl, overhearing inadvertently a remark of my dear father's, to the effect that he regretted that he had not called me Kerenhappuch."

"Kerenhappuch!" ejaculated Diana under her breath. Then to her quick sympathy there recurred a vague remembrance of some words she had heard—when or where she could hardly have said; those words by which the memory of the daughters of Job is handed down the ages invested with a shadowy fascination against which time is powerless. Her laughing lips softened as her grey eyes rested on the withered face, which in its age bore a mute witness to the girlish beauty which had faded untouched

by the deepest joys as by the deepest sorrows of life.

"'In all the world were none so fair!'" Diana quoted, incorrectly but very softly.

As though the words brought her back to herself with a shock, the old lady started violently and a faint flush stole into her cheeks.

"My dear!" she said, with fluttered remonstrance. "My dear! We don't—it is not seemly, I think—I have never considered such matters! Pray do not!"

Diana laughed, and a mischievous spirit seemed to come upon her. Shifting her position slightly, she began to shower questions upon Miss Keturah. Disconnected, erratic questions they were, about the life which the old lady had left behind her, and every now and then her low musical laugh would break out with a bewitching word which made it almost a caress. At last she rose, reluctantly enough.

"I must go," she exclaimed. "But you must see the world, my quaint Keturah! My heart is set on showing you the world. Come for a drive with me, now, this moment."

But Miss Keturah excused herself with some agitation.

"My dear, I feel it sadly *ungrateful* to say no to you in any matter, your kindness is so very great." Here Diana interposed with a warning shake of the head and of a slender threatening finger. "Yes, my love, you really must let me say so. But as to seeing the world, I really don't think—and I regret to say that as yet I have really sent no detailed communication to my friends. They will consider me sadly neglectful. And I propose to devote this morning to the accomplishment of that duty."

But, left to herself, Miss Keturah seemed to find the aforesaid duty a very heavy task. She made her precise little arrangements, took out a half-filled sheet of letter-paper, and took up her pen; and then she paused. She had already spent more than one unsatisfactory half-hour before that half-finished letter.

As a matter of fact, she had reached that point in her correspondence when some detailed description would be expected from her of the worldly woman who was alluded to among the grim, staid old friends from whom she had parted as her "connexion." And this description Miss Keturah found herself

absolutely incapable of composing. No phrases would occur to her with reference to her reprehensible "connexion" but such as were absolutely shocking to her in their tolerance for worldliness and affection for the worldly-minded—as represented by Diana. She was conscious of a desire—which amazed as much as it dismayed her—to palliate all the points of conduct which stamped Mrs. Forsyth as "a lost sheep," and dwelt exclusively upon her charms. "Such a sweet creature!" she murmured vaguely to herself, as she gazed helplessly at her paper. "Oh, dear me, such a sweet, kind creature!" But she was also keenly alive to the horror with which such a communication would be received by the worthy lady to whom it was addressed.

Finally, Miss Keturah decided that it was the part of a Christian woman to suspend judgement as long as might be. She disposed of the difficult question in a sentence in which she stated her intention of "extending her observation before committing to paper sentiments which might be considered premature," and finished her letter in triumph.

Miss Keturah "extended her observation" at her leisure as the days rolled into weeks, but sentiments which could be transmitted to her friends showed no signs of evolving themselves. The "unholy love" for Diana with which that lost sheep taxed her on one occasion, with a laugh of infinite enjoyment, developed day by day. Diana never attempted to conceal her knowledge of the struggle which it created in the little old lady; on the contrary, she appeared to take a mischievous pleasure in complicating it; exhibiting herself in her most wayward, capricious, and "worldly" moods, and then sweeping away Miss Keturah's horrified protests with irresistible fascination.

Miss Keturah, though she protested conscientiously, and was "painfully shocked," as she expressed it, again and again, was perfectly powerless to restrain her unruly affection.

Her tender interest in "my dear Diana," as she took to calling Mrs. Forsyth with much timid hesitation, developed in the little old lady perceptions which she had never exercised before; and a short time only had elapsed before that interest was extended to one of Diana's most frequent visitors. This was the man who had opened the drawing-room door on the night of Miss Keturah's arrival, a certain Mr. Marcus Ireland. There was that

about Mr. Marcus Ireland which induced in Miss Keturah during the earlier stages of their somewhat perfunctory intercourse a timid awe. "So—so—polished," she said to Diana. "So exceedingly talented! My love, his conversation makes me feel a little giddy, do you know!" But this sensation in Miss Keturah was certainly produced by no flow of conversation on Mr. Ireland's part. His talents were evinced rather in the man's personality, in his indolent acceptance of the prominence unconsciously and instinctively assigned to him wherever and whenever he appeared than in any personal activity. Scarcely a day passed, as it seemed to Miss Keturah, on which he did not visit Diana. When she had other visitors he would make himself lazily agreeable to them; when he found Miss Keturah and Diana alone together he rarely talked at all, leaving the conversation to Diana, who seemed always unusually gay and fanciful on these occasions.

"You have never congratulated me on being no longer alone," she said to him with a laugh, as he rose to take leave on one of these occasions. She had drawn Miss Keturah's hand through her arm as she spoke, and she was looking into his impassive face with a laugh in her eyes.

Marcus Ireland looked at her for a moment in silence.

"Have I not, really?" he said. "Ah! allow me to take this opportunity!"

His voice was dry; "peculiar," Miss Keturah said to herself.

It was shortly after this that Miss Keturah matured the great discovery that there could be no manner of doubt but that Mr. Marcus Ireland was "greatly attached" to Diana; and it was with an exceeding flutter of delighted excitement that she accepted the further conviction that "dear Diana's heart was not untouched" by Mr. Marcus Ireland. Romance and sentiment, frozen into numbness throughout her life, thawed into a fluttering warmth in the simple old maiden breast as she watched the "courtship." With tentative, trembling delicacy, she ventured to reveal to Diana what she described as her "perception of the state of affairs." Diana flushed crimson, and gazed at her for a moment with something strange in her grey eyes; then she laughed, musically but no less strangely; a mood more than usually fanciful seemed to take possession of her, and with soft words and little tender laughs, she proceeded to draw the

old lady out, willing her on to clothe in her prim, formal little phrases the innocent romance of her heart.

But as the months ran on, and winter and spring gave place to summer, Miss Keturah began to be vaguely troubled. That Diana should be wayward and capricious with her lover seemed to her by no means strange. Coyness, indeed, in her eyes, was but seemly. But by degrees she began to think that coyness might be carried to an excessive extent. Into the "courtship" there crept something which she could not understand—an element of which she was vaguely conscious, but which lay beyond the sphere of her innocently sentimental perceptions. Of Mr. Ireland's "intentions," as it seemed to Miss Keturah, there could be no possible doubt, and yet the consummation of the affair lagged. Clearly, therefore, the fault must lie with Diana. Mrs. Forsyth grew fitful and nervous. If Mr. Ireland did not come—and now and then his absences sent a cold chill through Miss Keturah's heart—she was restless and depressed. When he did come she was feverishly unlike herself. And she turned abruptly from Miss Keturah's most delicate allusion to the subject.

The end of June came. The theatre—a word which Miss Keturah never heard even from her dear Diana without a shudder—was to close immediately; and still Mrs. Forsyth had made no plan for leaving town. It was nearly twelve o'clock one night, and Miss Keturah, who always "retired" at ten, was lying wakeful with anxiety. During the past day Diana's feverish restlessness had touched such a point as it had never reached before. In the midst of her light, flippant talk she had alluded carelessly to a fact which Miss Keturah then learnt for the first time; namely, that Mr. Marcus Ireland had accepted a diplomatic appointment, and would shortly leave England for Russia. Poor Miss Keturah was unspeakably perturbed at the news. Diana had given her no opportunity for commenting upon it, even if she had felt able to do so, and she was reviewing the position of affairs now in much distress of mind, the little old face bordered by nightcap frills looking particularly small and troubled, when a low knock came at her door. "Oh, dear me! Come in," she said. And then as the door opened and a slight white figure came softly into the dimly-lighted room, she said agitatedly: "Diana! My love, I trust there is nothing amiss?"

Mrs. Forsyth had come quickly up to the bedside and stood looking down at her. She was very pale, and the past few months had made her much thinner; there were heavy shadows round her eyes now, and in the eyes themselves there was a constant look, which Miss Keturah's old eyes could not see, of strain and suffering.

"Nothing, Miss Keturah!" she said. "I only came—I thought perhaps you might not be asleep, and I thought I should like to say good night to you. I shan't see you in the morning, you see!" Her voice was low and not quite like itself.

"Thank you, my love," returned Miss Keturah affectionately. "True; dear Mrs. Frampton will expect me by eleven o'clock."

Mrs. Frampton was a connexion of one of Miss Keturah's old friends, and a connexion, as Miss Keturah had regretfully felt, of whom any one might be proud. "Most godly people, my love," she had assured Diana on more than one occasion. It had been a matter for anxious remorse with her when she realised a growing disinclination for the society of Mrs. Frampton—who was indeed a matron of such stony and severe demeanour that her proud connexions were most like to rejoice in her at a distance—and her voice as she spoke was a ludicrous combination of reluctance and self-reproach.

But Diana did not seem to notice it. She stood quite still absently stroking one of the withered old hands which lay upon the counterpane, and after a moment's silence, during which Miss Keturah looked anxiously up into her pale face, the little old lady took a desperate resolution.

"Diana, my love," she said, in a somewhat quavering voice, "I cannot fail to see that you are not yourself."

The movement of Diana's fingers stopped suddenly, and then the auburn head dropped gently down on to the pillow beside Miss Keturah. But Mrs. Forsyth did not speak, and Miss Keturah went on bravely:

"My love, I would not for a moment intrude upon affairs of the heart which must ever be sacred, but I feel that a word may be helpful to you. Diana, love, pardon me if I am wrong in believing that you are not disinclined towards Mr. Marcus Ireland?"

There was no answer, only the hand in which Miss Keturah's still rested closed suddenly and involuntarily.

"Then, my dear Diana, I feel that you

should bring yourself to confess your attachment. The time has come, my love, when it is hardly fair to your suitor to allow a very natural and admirable delicacy to hold you longer from that confession!"

There was a long silence. Diana softly lifted Miss Keturah's hand and put it to her lips. Then she sprang lightly to her feet and shook back her hair, her eyes shining rather wildly, her cheeks flushed. "Good night, my sweet Keturah," she said. "Good night, my sweet, quaint Keturah!" The next moment the door closed behind her. She had not kissed the little old lady.

There was no colour in her face when she reached her own room, and it was drawn and haggard. There was a letter clenched in her hand. "Yes or no," she said to herself. "Yes or no to-morrow! Why did I ever play with him? Oh, why, why?"

CHAPTER III.

It was about five o'clock on the evening of the next day, and in her sitting-room stood Miss Keturah in her coal-scuttle bonnet and a black shawl of China crape. On the threshold was Diana's maid.

"My mistress told me you would not be in until eight o'clock, ma'am," she said, "or I would have had some tea ready. I will fetch you a cup directly."

But Miss Keturah refused tea with tremulous haste. She had not expected to return so soon, she said, but—here she faltered, and recovered herself with a quavering dignity—circumstances had arisen! The little old lady was flushed and trembling. She paused a moment and then said:

"If your mistress is within doors, Mrs. Mason, I shall be greatly obliged if you will give her my fond love and say that I should be glad to speak to her."

Nearly a quarter of an hour went by. Miss Keturah had retired to her bedroom, and returned to her sitting-room in her cap and the little white shawl, without which she was never seen, still trembling exceedingly, when the door opened suddenly and Diana came in. Her face was very white and set, but over its rigid lines there played a light of wild excitement, which sparkled and shone in her grey eyes and seemed to battle with a strange, far-away look of tense, reckless anticipation.

"What is it, my quaint Keturah?" she

said lightly. "What have the gods been doing to you that you reappear so early?"

Miss Keturah had risen on Diana's appearance, and had taken two little uncertain steps towards her.

"My love!" she began, and the quivering of her voice was pitiful to hear, "my love, I—I—have been exceedingly distressed."

In the curious excitement which seemed to possess her, Mrs. Forsyth apparently failed to appreciate the words, or the tone in which they were uttered. She laughed vaguely and gave a fanciful touch to the old lady's cap.

"What a pretty old lady you are, Keturah!" she said gaily, looking with strange, bright eyes into Miss Keturah's face. "What a pretty, innocent old lady!"

"My dear," said Miss Keturah, "if you will sit down for a few moments and listen to me, I am quite sure that you can reassure me on a point which has occasioned me great distress."

She seated herself, waiting while Diana threw herself into a chair with another light laugh; then she cleared her throat.

"I will not," she began, "pause to explain the details of the conversation between myself and the lady I have visited to-day—I regret that I can no longer refer to her as my friend. I will say at once, my love, that I need no words from you to convince me that the statement which she made so positively, and insisted upon with—with such unchristian feeling, is wholly false." Miss Keturah paused; she had spoken with growing agitation, and she was incapable for the moment of controlling her voice. Over the graceful, careless figure opposite her a stillness had fallen, and in the pause Diana rose suddenly and stood leaning against the window, looking out. Miss Keturah was too much occupied with her own emotion to protest against the movement, and she continued tremulously: "My love, you will believe me, I am sure, when I say that I only allude to the scandalous report which I am about to mention, because I am given to understand that it is currently believed among those who know you only in that public capacity which I can never sufficiently deplore for you."

Diana's forehead was pressed against the window-pane now, and the hand which held the curtain was tightly clenched. But she did not speak.

"My dear," faltered Miss Keturah, "I

have heard it asserted to-day that Mr. Marcus Ireland is a married man!"

There was a dead silence. Diana never moved. Miss Keturah sat braced for the outbreak of passionate indignation which she vaguely expected, her face uplifted and working nervously. Still, Diana did not move, and gradually the withered old face began to alter. There stole over it a look of bewilderment, of incredulity, of reluctant, horror-struck questioning.

"Diana!" murmured Miss Keturah faintly. "Diana!"

Then Diana turned. Her eyes fell on the little old face, a picture of absolute, blank dismay, and the drawn lines of her face broke up suddenly in a burst of hysterical laughter. She fell on her knees, and buried her head in Miss Keturah's lap.

"Oh, Keturah!" she cried. "My quaint Keturah, did you never hear of such a thing before?"

There was no answer, and Diana, choking back her laughter, raised her head abruptly. Miss Keturah was lying back in her chair, white and shaking.

Over the recklessness of Diana's face there flashed a wholly indescribable expression, and she stretched out her hands impulsively.

"Ah!" she cried, "dear, don't! Don't! Is it so dreadful to you?" Her voice was low, and ringing with a love and pity which was penetrated with some poignant feeling less easily defined.

Miss Keturah's lips moved, but for a moment no words were audible. Then she said in a faint whisper:

"I am so shocked! So grievously shocked!"

There was no assumption about the words; no sitting in judgement, and no condemnation. Before the perfect simplicity of the innocent feeling to which they witnessed, Diana dropped her forehead once more upon the trembling hands she held. There was another pause, and then Diana lifted her head and rose.

"Prejudice, Keturah!" she said, with defiant lightness. "Arrant slavery to words and forms! Marcus Ireland is a married man. That is to say, he has a wife from whom he is separated. But except for the name of the thing, he is absolutely free!"

The physical effects of the shock were passing from Miss Keturah. Her lips were less ashen though she still trembled, and she drew herself up in her chair, as she said with gentle severity:

"My love, you are speaking at random! The marriage bond is sacred."

"Love is sacred!" cried Diana passionately, facing round as she stood by the window. "Love, and nothing else in the world!" She stopped herself abruptly, and laughed, a high-pitched, tuneless laugh. "Why, even you, my quaint Keturah," she said, "even you, brought up in a world in which sentiment and sin are synonymous, I suppose, have a soft corner in your dear old heart, in which you cherish your innocent little romanticisms! Don't be a slave, Keturah!"

"My dear," said Miss Keturah, "I do not think I follow you exactly, but I believe I understood you to refer to the sacred qualities of love." A faint flush touched Miss Keturah's cheek as she spoke the word softly and reverently, "It is this very sacredness, attached to it as I am convinced by divine ordinance, which makes it so incumbent upon us to preserve the treasure when it is committed to us in perfect spotlessness. An affection which is in itself sinful——"

Another reckless laugh broke from Diana.

"Sinful!" she cried lightly. "We don't talk about things being sinful nowadays, Keturah! It has gone out! Things are 'bad form' or 'bad taste,' that's all!"

Miss Keturah met her eyes with grave simplicity.

"I am well aware, my dear Diana," she said, "that forms of expression have undergone extensive alteration, but facts of right and wrong cannot change. My dear, I am sure that your own woman's instinct cannot be at fault in such a matter."

Diana stood motionless, gazing down with strange, fascinated eyes into the face uplifted to her, so dignified in the perfect innocence of its age. Then with a strangled gasp she lifted her clasped hands and pressed them tightly to her heart, turning away as she did so.

At that instant there came a knock at the door, and Diana started as though she had been shot. She turned sharply towards the door, with fixed, dilated eyes.

"Come in!" she said; and her voice was high-pitched and harsh.

The door opened and Diana's maid appeared.

"If you please, ma'am," she said, addressing Diana, "Mr. Ireland is in the drawing-room."

She waited a moment as though for a word from her mistress; then receiving none, withdrew, shutting the door after her. Diana stood motionless and rigid, staring straight before her.

"Diana, my love!" Moments had elapsed, and the words came from Miss Keturah, low and tremulous. As she heard them, Diana stretched out her hand, suddenly and without turning, and caught Miss Keturah's in a convulsive pressure.

"Miss Keturah!" she said. "Miss Keturah!" Her breath was coming in laboured gasps, and the two words rang like a cry for help.

But Miss Keturah's answer to that cry was all unconscious. The depths from which it came were utterly beyond her ken, and she only understood that "dear Diana was sadly distressed." She rose, trembling, but with a little flush of determination on her old face.

"My love," she said, "I feel that it is better for all concerned that you should not meet this unhappy gentleman again. I will go to him, Diana, and tell him that you are awake to the—the unsuitability of the intercourse you have hitherto permitted, and—with your leave, my love—I will request him to discontinue his visits for the short time he remains in England. My dear, believe me, this is a step you will never regret."

Diana, still with that clutch upon the hand she held, turned her head slowly and looked at Miss Keturah. There was an intensity in her eyes as of a woman at the very crisis of her life.

"Regret!" she said, "regret!" Her voice was low and shivering. Then she broke suddenly into a kind of hoarse cry. "You!" she cried. "You will go to him? Yes! Yes! You shall! Quick! Where is some writing-paper?"

She was seeking feverishly on the table, and finding what she wanted, she fell on her knees and scribbled a few lines in pencil. Then in the same desperate haste she folded the paper and held it out to Miss Keturah without rising.

"Take it!" she cried hoarsely. "Tell him it is my answer."

Bewildered and confused, clearly conscious of nothing but her conviction that what was unsuitable must cease, Miss Keturah took the note. She paused a moment at the drawing-room door; then she turned the handle and passed in, her quaint little figure very erect, her face a little flushed.

Mr. Marcus Ireland was standing at the farther end of the room, and as the door opened he turned quickly. Seeing Miss Keturah, however, he paused abruptly for an instant. Then he came forward with rather careless courtesy to meet her. His face was pale, and his cold blue eyes were preoccupied and hungry-looking.

"Good day!" he said nonchalantly. "Mrs. Forsyth is at home, isn't she?"

Miss Keturah had made him a stiff little curtsy, ignoring his offered hand, and she replied with prim formality:

"Mrs. Forsyth is at home. She has, however, asked me to represent her in the reception of your visit, and she has charged me with an explanation on her behalf."

Mr. Marcus Ireland stared down at the little old lady, who met his eyes with mild severity. Then he caught his moustache with savage impatience between his teeth.

"Perhaps you will be good enough to explain?" he said.

Miss Keturah drew herself up firmly.

"The duty that devolves upon me is a most painful one," she said. "I cannot attempt to conceal my sense of the reprehensibleness of the conduct which renders explanation necessary—conduct originating, I feel, as far as my dear Diana is concerned, in the thoughtlessness of youth."

She stopped, regarding him with an expression of stern disapproval which showed no disposition to extend a similar excuse to him; and into the face of the man there crept an ugly smile. He bowed ironically.

"I will not point out," continued Miss Keturah, "the exceeding impropriety of your constant visits to my dear young friend, you being, as I have only this day been given to understand, a married man; nor will I allude"—Miss Keturah's cheeks were burning painfully—"to the reports to which these visits give rise. I will merely say that Mrs. Forsyth has become fully alive to the—the unseemliness of the existing position of affairs, and that she begs that you will discontinue your visits for the short time during which, as I understand, you will remain in England."

She paused. She was facing him bravely, but her breath was short as she finished speaking. Marcus Ireland bowed again with mock deference.

"Miss Brown has discharged her mission to admiration!" he said. He was moving forward with insolent coolness to open the door for her, when Miss Keturah held out to him the note she carried.

"I am charged to give you this," she said. "Doubtless——"

But Marcus Ireland interrupted her. As his eyes fell upon the note his face changed suddenly into hard lines of intense expectancy. He took it quickly, tore it open, and as he read the lines Diana had written, his features were absolutely transformed by the convulsion of rage which passed across them. A fierce imprecation broke from him, and Miss Keturah uttered a little cry. Then he controlled himself into his usual cynical calm. He crushed the letter deliberately in his hand and turned to Miss Keturah.

"Pardon me in that I had underrated your talents, my dear madam!" he said. "You have——"

The sentence was never finished. The door opened and Diana appeared, white to the very lips, her great grey eyes burning and shining. She seemed to take in the position at a glance, and she went straight across the room to Miss Keturah, took one of the little old lady's hands in hers, and so turned and confronted Marcus Ireland.

"I have come," she said, "because I thought you ought to hear it from my own lips. My answer is, No, no, no!"

For an instant Marcus Ireland met her eyes in silence. Then as they still faced each other, his face now as white as hers, he said in a low, hoarse voice:

"Do you remember that I leave England to-morrow?"

"Yes," she said.

There was a pause. Except for the clasp in which Diana held Miss Keturah's hand, the man and the woman alike seemed absolutely oblivious of the little old lady's presence.

"Diana!" he said.

"No!"

"You will not come with me? This is—good-bye?"

"Good-bye!"

He waited a moment, still holding her eyes in his. Then he moved slowly towards the door, and with his hand on the lock turned and looked at her again. Diana never moved, only her hold on Miss Keturah tightened. Then the door closed behind him, they heard his footsteps die away down the stairs, and they heard the street-door shut behind him.

Diana turned with a low, wailing cry, and let her face fall on the little old lady's shoulder.

"Oh, Miss Keturah!" she cried, "I loved him! I loved him!"

But the tremulous old hand to which she clung had saved her. She had stood on the brink of a precipice, and it had held her back. Marcus Ireland had passed out of her life for ever.

BLACKMAIL.

By FLORENCE TERRY.

Author of "*Connie's Hero*," "*A commonplace Roman*," "*A Daughter of the People*," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A STRIP of red drugget across the pavement, an awning over it, and a man stationed at the edge of the footpath, signified to people passing through Portland Place that Lady Topham was giving a dance. A small but decidedly various crowd had gathered on either side of the red strip to criticise the smart folks as they walked from carriage to house, into which they passed to be swallowed up in a blaze of light. A workman, who had been silently contemplating the arrivals for some time, suddenly took hold of the bowl of his pipe and, removing it from his mouth, waved the stem in the direction of the doorway, through which some people were just passing.

"Them's the sort the country 'ud be a jolly sight better without: what do you think, matey?"

The man thus addressed turned his eyes in the direction of the speaker. He also had been watching the smart folk, but with a curious expression on his face for a man attracted by mere idle curiosity. His lips were firm and compressed, and there was a hard gleam in his eyes which betokened that his sensations were not altogether pleasurable. A rather wry smile distorted his mouth for an instant before he answered.

"I think so, too," he said, then added, "at present."

The other looked somewhat doubtful as to what this addendum might mean.

"I thought you was one of us when I saw the way you looked at the nob. There was a sort of hamiable expression on yer face wick spoke volumes."

"Us—meaning?"

"Socialists, gov'nor; and 'at present' meaning?"

"I mean that we on the pavement are generally Socialists only until we get into the house."

The workman took this expounding of

his doctrine in good part, and grinned appreciatively.

"Dessay you're right," he said good-humouredly. "If we was togged up in a swaller-tail coat, with a big diamond stuck in the middle of a dicky, we should say as Socialism was all tommy-rot, too."

The other nodded, but did not reply, and his neighbour, striking a match on the leg of his trousers, relighted his pipe, which in the course of conversation had gone out. He smoked meditatively for a moment as if he were preparing a fresh remark on the same subject, when the arrival of another carriage claimed his attention.

This was a very perfectly appointed brougham, drawn by a pair of splendid dark bays, and was a turn-out which meant money, and plenty of it.

Immediately behind it was a smart private hansom, out of which sprang a good-looking young fellow, who hastened forward to join the party which was alighting from the brougham. They were an elderly but well-preserved man, a quiet-looking woman nearly his own age, and a young girl. As the last stood for a moment in the light of the lamp, a little buzz of admiration arose amongst the critics on the pavement. Not that she was so strictly beautiful, or that her features called for special remark. There was a general impression of soft, fair hair, and a clear, pale skin, gleaming white teeth, and laughing eyes, but the girl herself was the very incarnation of health and joy, of brilliant spirits, and a vigorous appreciation of all that goes to make life delightful, and a thing to be desired.

"D'ye know who that is?" said the workman to the man by his side, as the party disappeared into the house. "D'ye see that carriage and that rig-out? Paid for with other folks' money, guv'nor. That's Francis Ludlow, Esquire, gentleman at large, company promoter. Swindlers I call them sort."

"The girl's pretty, though," said another man.

"'Er frock's pretty. Fine feathers make fine birds," retorted a woman.

The workman laughed.

"They're all alike, ain't they, bless 'em," he said to his neighbour. "Can't abear to give no other woman credit for 'er looks."

"I suspect there is much the same nature under both silk and cotton," the young man said curtly, and turning away he strode into the darkness of the night.

His object was gained. It was not the first time by many that he had stood for an hour or more waiting just to catch a glimpse of Ida Ludlow, a momentary glimpse to appease the hunger of his soul—a pleasure which was always marred by the sight of her father. Swindler, the workman had called him, and who should know how true that was better than he?

That his own father had died of a broken heart, hiding his poverty and his suffering to the end with all the strength of a proud nature; that he himself was poor, friendless, and alone; he owed to Francis Ludlow. It is not an easy thing to hate a man with every fibre of one's being, to hunger and thirst for vengeance, to long to drag one's enemy in the dust, and at the same time to love his daughter with just as much strength and intensity. It means being a prey to conflicting passions which tear and rend their victim, swaying him now this way, now that. Andrew Jardine was a good hater, not in a mean small way which expends its force in petty spite and animosity, but in a large, whole-hearted fashion which smites and spares not when the opportunity comes.

But though his opportunity had come, yet he held his hand.

Nearly a year ago chance had thrown his enemy's daughter into his path. They had met at a country vicarage where Ida was visiting the Vicar's young wife. Andrew had been ill, and rest and change being imperative, he had betaken himself to a farmhouse near the village, there to recruit his strength. The Vicar was a friend of the Jardines, one of the few who remained faithful in the face of adversity; and during the month he mixed with the quiet, uneventful life of the little community, Andrew's opportunities for meeting Miss Ludlow were many. At first the mere mention of her name had made him inwardly recoil, but soon her absolute unconsciousness of wrong, her brightness, her vivid personality, worked their charm, and before he was aware of danger, Jardine found himself in bonds which he was powerless to break.

Even at that time he had been working slowly but surely to a certain end, and not long after his return to town the remaining evidence of Mr. Ludlow's secret rascality fell into his hands. Two months before he would have rejoiced at the power of causing the downfall of his enemy; now he held back, and asked himself what he should do.

Gradually there grew into his mind a purpose; instead of casting down the man he hated, he would use him as a stepping-stone to his own happiness. On the one hand lay revenge and outer darkness, on the other the possibility of light, and life, and love.

A few hours later Jardine and the man he hated were face to face. Of the two it was Jardine, however, who seemed ill at ease; for, in spite of justice being on his side, he did not like the task he had set before him. Mr. Ludlow had received him with bland courtesy and an impassive face. His visitor's name conveyed no warning to him. Andrew Jardine's father had been but one of the crowd of rash speculators on whom he had thriven, and it was impossible to remember them all.

At first, indeed, he had misunderstood Jardine altogether, and thought he was one of the numerous applicants for situations with large salaries and nothing to do, with which rich men are pestered. With this idea he had endeavoured to cut short his visitor's introductory speech, with the manifest desire of getting rid of him as speedily as possible.

"We are playing at cross purposes," Jardine said, hurried into declaring his object without circumlocution. "If you read these papers it will simplify matters, I think."

Mr. Ludlow waved them gently aside.

"I really have no time——" he began, when the other interrupted him.

"They relate to the affairs of the Dyke Mining Company."

For an infinitesimal portion of time Mr. Ludlow hesitated; but so slight was the pause that any one less watchful than Jardine would not have detected it at all.

"The Dyke Mining Company was wound up five years ago. It is of no further interest to any one," he answered quietly.

"Except to those who lost their money in it," said Jardine.

Mr. Ludlow shrugged his shoulders.

"I hope you were not one of those unfortunates," he said politely.

"No, I date my ruin further back, to the time of another hitherto undetected fraud."

As he spoke the eyes of the two men met, and for the first time Mr. Ludlow realised his danger.

The knowledge braced him and called all his faculties into play. Calmly he put out his hand for the papers which Jardine still held, and opening them, deliberately perused them from beginning to end.

"A very clear and concise account of an interesting piece of business, if there were only any truth in it," he remarked coolly, as he refolded the sheets.

"Mr. Ludlow, the time for that sort of denial is past. Of every accusation I have ample proof."

"Ah! Would it be indiscreet to enquire from what source you have gained this knowledge, and where your witnesses lie hidden?"

"It would be very indiscreet if I were to tell you," retorted Jardine, in a tone as dry as his own.

"I will not pretend to misunderstand you, though I still fail to grasp the motive for this visit. Chance has thrown in your way, or you have deliberately set to work to discover, certain facts which you imagine it is my interest to conceal. If you yourself believe that I planned the wholesale robbery of the Dyke Mine shareholders, and hold such irrefragable proofs of my dishonesty, why did you not apply for a warrant for my arrest, instead of seeking an interview with me?" As he spoke he laid his hand lightly but with contemptuous significance on a cheque-book which lay beside him. Jardine flushed hotly and for a moment looked dangerous, then calming himself with an effort he answered:

"You may put away your cheque-book, I have not come for money."

"Then, my dear sir, why have you spared me, and what have you come for?" said Mr. Ludlow, in the tone of one whose patience is exhausted.

"I have spared you for the sake of your daughter," Jardine said curtly.

For the first time a look of anger came into the older man's face.

"Leave my daughter out of the discussion," he said haughtily.

"Unfortunately I cannot. A year ago I made her acquaintance while staying at Bitton. I have never forgotten her, I never shall, and I come to you to-day as a suitor for your daughter's hand."

"I see; the child is to pay for the father's misdeeds, quite in the good old style," said Mr. Ludlow, with a slow, contemptuous smile. "Pardon me, Mr.—er—Jardine, if I give you a word of advice. You have mistaken your vocation. Turn your attention to melodrama and you may make a fortune, which I fear you never will as a journalist, which you tell me you are, or as an adept in the dangerous profession of blackmailing."

"It is you who are talking melodrama,

not I," said Jardine. "I simply ask permission to visit at your house, and make no secret of my motive for doing so. I demand a fair chance like any other man, with this addition, that you will use all legitimate means to further my wishes."

"You are an impudent scoundrel. Do you think I will permit my daughter to marry an unknown adventurer to save myself a few hours' annoyance?"

"Ten years' penal servitude," amended Jardine quietly. "But your objection is beside the mark, because I am not an unknown adventurer. A Jardine of Blankshire cannot be sneered at in point of birth, and I have a clean record, Mr. Ludlow. That I have no fortune, you should be the last man in the world to cavil at, as it was one of your schemes which ruined my father."

"Taking all you say for granted, I would not force my daughter's inclination in this matter even if I could—even if I could," he repeated with emphasis.

"I am not asking you to make the attempt, I am simply begging your consent to marry Miss Ludlow should I be fortunate enough to win her affections, and ask you to give me opportunities to try to gain them."

A heavy frown gathered on Mr. Ludlow's face. It was evident that the proposition was distinctly unpalatable. There was silence for a few moments, which Jardine, guessing that any pleading would weaken his own cause, did not attempt to break. A clock striking the hour startled Mr. Ludlow from his reverie.

"I can give you no longer now," he said hurriedly. "I am already late for an important appointment. At present, Mr. Jardine, you have merely made an accusation against me without producing a tittle of evidence which would have any weight in a law court. I absolutely deny the whole thing, and most men in my position would kick you out of that door. However, you are young and hot-headed, and I am willing to make some allowance for you in your peculiar circumstances. Therefore, if you like to dine with me to-night at eight o'clock, quite 'without prejudice,' mind, we can discuss the matter further."

CHAPTER II.

It was summer time, and the soft evening breeze was touching everything lightly, lovingly, like cool finger-tips on a fevered brow. In a boat sat a man and a girl. He

had given up rowing, and they drifted with the current as the stream bore the boat gently along between wooded banks.

For a time neither of them spoke, so well satisfied did each seem with the mere presence of the other. The girl was idly watching the little ripples her fingers made in the water as she trailed her hand over the side of the boat, while he watched her face with his whole soul in his eyes.

"Of what are you thinking?" she asked at last, looking up and meeting his glance.

"Of the wonder of it all," he said, with lover-like vagueness. "A year ago I had no more chance of winning you than I had of winning a Royal Princess; to-day I know that you will belong to me for ever."

"Suppose—only suppose, mind—that I was fickle and changed my mind," she said.

"You are my fate, Ida; I must always love you, whatever happens."

"It has been fate all along," she said musingly. "Our meeting at the Bellamys', your getting to know father just when you did, just in the nick of time as it were."

"You mean Talbot," he said quickly. "I believe you had more than half a liking for that curled Assyrian bull."

"He is a good fellow," she said stoutly; "but never mind him. Even if I liked him once, I like you better now."

"Say love," he said, "love which will be with us always. Even when we are quite old, and are going down the hill hand in hand, you shall only see me as I am now, for I shall be your lover still."

Some months had passed since that evening when Jardine had made up his mind; and he had so far succeeded all along the line.

"Are you sure you love this man?" Mr. Ludlow had asked anxiously of his daughter.

"Quite sure, father dear. Are you not pleased? I thought you saw and approved."

"To tell the truth, Ida, I saw, but I thought that George Talbot was the favourite."

"You speak as if you were disappointed."

"No, no, dear. So that you are happy, that is all I care for."

Disappointed! He scarcely dared to tell himself how disappointed. Why had she not cared for Talbot instead?

But if he had thought the matter over he would have seen that on the principle that extremes meet, it was only natural that

Jardine should have an attraction for Ida. Ever since she could remember anything, she had been surrounded by the lilies and roses of life. Her mother had died when she was only ten years old, but her place had been well filled by a widowed sister of her father's. Mrs. Grace held but one theory as to the bringing up of children—to fill their youth with happiness, so that whatever the future might bring, they had a stock of sunshine to fall back upon. Accordingly Ida knew nothing of the stern realities of life, and Jardine was the first person she had met who disdained to keep up the pretty Society fiction that the world was a huge playground inhabited by people for whom it was always play-time.

In her little circle no one was particularly in earnest about any big thing, though they expended a vast amount of energy over trifles. The heads were mostly connected with the City in one way or another, and while they made the money their wives and sons and daughters spent it. So no doubt the fathers were serious enough, but then in social gatherings fathers don't count. Some of the sons dabbled a little with law-books and dinners as a preparation for the Bar, a few eyed the Army with a certain amount of favour, while fewer still coquetted with the Church, but they were all gay and debonair about it, just as were their sisters about their little pet crazes and foibles. But Jardine was different. Not that he was sulky or stupid, or disliked fun, but there was a breezy cynicism about him, a bluff Carlylesque contempt for cant and shams which prevented him from giving the Pas de Quatre and the Barn Dance the importance which those triumphs of terpsichorean art deserved, while even the very last new craze adopted by smart people merely moved him to a languid smile, not altogether devoid of contempt. For some time all went as smoothly as the hearts of lovers could desire.

Strangely enough the discordant note was struck by Jardine himself. As the time approached when they should discuss the date of their marriage, Jardine began to talk of himself and his prospects in a manner Ida could not understand. He took to sounding her, as it were, as to how large or rather how small an income would suffice to make her happy, with a complete ignoring of the fortune which Mr. Ludlow had always promised to settle upon her at her marriage with his consent. It was no use for her to playfully insist on

dangling this before his eyes, to say that in round figures it would rather more than double their income, because he simply waved it aside without vouchsafing any explanation whatever, and came doggedly back to his starting-point—would she be content to live with him on considerably less than five hundred a year?

"It is absurd wanting me to answer a question on a matter which will never arise," she said one day, irritated at last by his persistence.

Jardine got up and began to pace the room with long strides.

"Did it never strike you, Ida, that when a man in my position loves a girl in yours, he lays himself open to misconstruction and calumny?"

"I do not see how," said Ida, shaking her head obstinately.

Jardine smiled.

"I have no money except a moderate income which I earn from day to day, while you are the daughter of a rich man. The world will call me a fortune-hunter."

"If I were old and ugly it might, but——" an eloquent shrug finished the sentence.

"As it is you are too adorable for there to be any fear, you think," said Jardine, looking at her as if he thought so too in spite of his words.

"You earnest people who take everything with such alarming seriousness are very impracticable sometimes. Tell me, Andrew, what it is you really want."

"I want to know, dear, if you would be content to marry me as I am now, a hard-working journalist, with no recommendation except that I love you with all my soul; to come to me empty-handed; to trust all your future to me without a thought or regret for the luxury you leave behind."

"If it were necessary, yes; but it is not necessary, and even if I were willing, father would not hear of such a proceeding."

"But if he agreed to it?" Jardine asked quickly.

"He would not agree," said Ida coldly. "Neither he nor I are so much in love with unnecessary self-sacrifice as you appear to imagine. Were there occasion for it, no doubt I should bear my part; as it is, your suggestion is absurd."

Seeing that she was hurt, Jardine allowed the discussion to drop for the time. But the seed was sown. Ida could not forget Jardine's earnest per-

sistency, and the idea that sooner or later he would return to the subject made her uneasy, almost unwilling to be alone with him.

In turn he too began to feel hurt and angry, and made a resolution to speak directly to Mr. Ludlow on the subject which had raised such a barrier between himself and Ida. But here again he was baffled.

"I quite appreciate the subtly conveyed insult of your objection to accept, however indirectly, any of my money, Mr. Jardine, but you must settle it with Ida. She and Mrs. Grace have known for some years that I intended giving her ten thousand pounds as a marriage portion. You forced my consent, and I have no reason to withhold her dot, if she claims it. You can give her no reason for not taking it but an overstrained whim, which Ida is quite intelligent enough to see is not complimentary to me."

What he said was perfectly true. Jardine had forced his consent, and found too late that it carried with it a condition which was peculiarly obnoxious under the circumstances.

To Ida, much as she loved him, his objection appeared ridiculous, almost unworthy. It was as though, for the mere gratification of a piece of petty pride, he would selfishly deprive her of many things to which she had been accustomed all her life. On his part he could not quite put himself in Ida's place, and appraising things too much according to the value he would have put upon them, he judged her harshly.

At first Mrs. Grace, with perhaps more romance than common sense, had taken Jardine's side and urged Ida to give in to her lover's wish, but Mr. Ludlow, on becoming aware of this, had given her a strong hint to adopt the opposite view. This Mrs. Grace was too fond of Andrew to do, but Mr. Ludlow's hints were generally acted upon by his household, so that she deemed it best to follow his advice so far as to abstain from further argument, and to remain neutral. Thus Jardine lost a powerful ally.

Probably in time Ida would have submitted, for her love for Jardine was strong enough to carry her through any sacrifice, but with crafty cunning Mr. Ludlow set to work to widen the breach between them.

At the first sign of a disagreement he began to hope that a carefully planned

scheme of his might yet be carried through.

For a long time he had endeavoured to draw Mr. Talbot into his net, but when Ida's engagement was announced the young man had ceased to take any interest in Mr. Ludlow's companies and combinations. Mr. Ludlow was annoyed, but had submitted to his disappointment with a fairly good grace; lately, however, circumstances had arisen which made Mr. Talbot's co-operation of vital importance. Times were ticklish; the hitherto gullible public was growing wary and most reprehensibly cautious. Things which worked splendidly ten, nay, five years ago, would not now catch a child, and Mr. Ludlow found himself in the unenviable position of a man who has built a house on a rotten foundation. It was constantly requiring a prop here and a stay there, which if not placed at the right moment would result in the whole edifice toppling down and burying the owner beneath its ruins.

At present there was but one idea in his mind: Talbot must be secured, and if there was no other way, Ida must be sacrificed. Not that he used the word sacrifice even to himself, for after all Ida had certainly shown George Talbot great favour before Jardine had appeared on the scene, therefore she evidently liked him, and did she but know it, all her father's schemes were for her benefit.

With such sophistry did Mr. Ludlow deceive himself, till at last a plan began to take shape in his mind. At the cost of an unpleasant scene with his daughter, during which he would to a certain extent have to give himself away, he could snap the already enfeebled tie between Ida and Jardine. This once accomplished, he had no fear of being able to twist Talbot round his finger. With any one but Jardine, such a trick would have been too risky, but Mr. Ludlow had gauged his man, and knew that his love for Ida was too great to allow him to put his old threat into execution, while of the new treachery he would never have any suspicion.

Strangely enough, Jardine was blind to the possible end of the strained relations between himself and Ida. If the thought had entered his mind he would have rejected it with contempt.

"When two people really love each other nothing parts them," he would assert dogmatically; and nothing less than an incoherent, yet forcible, letter from Ida, in which she stated her conviction that they

were utterly unsuited to each other, and prayed to be released from her engagement, would have opened his eyes to the truth.

Startled and dismayed, he hastened to see her, only to hear from her lips the words she had already written to him.

"But I cannot understand it," he said, with anger and wounded pride struggling for mastery. "You loved me two weeks ago, to-day you say you love me no longer. Is it this wretched money that has come between us?"

"We look at things so differently," she said evasively; "and I am sure there can be no happiness where people are not agreed."

"Ida," he pleaded, "we agreed till just lately, surely you will not let such a trifle part us."

"Will you marry me with my fortune settled on myself?" she said quickly.

"I cannot consent to that," he answered, not noticing the manner in which she had worded her question. "But neither will I consent to leave you," he continued.

"You surely would not hold me to my word against my will," she said, with almost a frightened look in her eyes.

"Is it absolutely your will to be released?" he asked, with a coldness which belied the heat within.

"It is really my wish," she answered, with a little pleading movement of her hands.

"There is no need to look like that," he said sharply. "I will persuade no woman to marry me against her will. You toss aside my love and prefer your father's money. So be it. You will see me no more."

Seizing his hat, he hurried from the room, nearly knocking against Mrs. Grace, who was coming in. He never stopped or looked behind, so that he did not see Ida fall almost unconscious into her aunt's outstretched arms.

CHAPTER III.

IN after time Jardine could never recall those weeks without a shiver. He suffered as only a strong man can suffer—silently, and in secret. Like one who has had a limb amputated, he felt numbed and crushed with the bitter knowledge that henceforth he must go maimed.

Could he but have held Ida blameless, he would not have suffered quite so keenly; as it was, he had not only lost

the woman, but all that that woman had symbolised to him. He had placed her on a pedestal, and decking her with all the virtues and graces which a true-hearted man loves to believe belong to womanhood, he had adored her with all the strength of his young, unworn heart. She had accepted his worship so long as it chimed with her own inclination, but directly conflicting influences disturbed the even-current, worldly prudence stepped in, and she cast his love aside, choosing the solid material things of this world in its stead.

To Jardine, her motive seemed so miserably inadequate, and betrayed a fickleness and shallowness of heart to which he could not close his eyes. Sometimes a sick longing came over him to leave the country where he had been so unhappy, to go far away and seek forgetfulness in other and wilder lands. Then other thoughts prevailed, and stubbornly he braced himself to do his work, and to mix with his fellows as heretofore. He looked ill and worn, so that those that knew him but little said:

"Jardine is burning the candle at both ends, and will have a break-down."

But he did not break down. He was older, more bitter, more cynical; not so even in his temper, less companionable; but he kept on doggedly fighting his trouble and defying it to crush him.

He heard from various sources that Mr. Talbot was a constant visitor at the Ludlows'. He still occasionally saw Mr. Ludlow, for he remained faithful to his scheme of forcing that gentleman to undo a little of the evil he had worked. Here a young man was fairly started in life, there an old couple were rescued from penury, a widow was set up in a suitable business, while the orphans were fed and clothed.

One evening he was hurrying along Fleet Street, scarcely heeding the cries of the newspaper boys, who were shouting at the top of their voices, "Great Bank Failure. Arrest of a Director!"

"Do you hear that, Mr. Jardine? But I suppose you know all about it," said some one, touching him on the shoulder.

It was Mr. Talbot. Jardine felt slightly surprised at being stopped, for though the two men had met frequently, it was natural, under the circumstance, that there could never be any cordiality between them.

"How d'ye do?" said Jardine, nodding carelessly. "What's up?"

"Do you mean to say you don't know that Ludlow has bolted, and that his precious partner Renforth is arrested?"

"Good heavens!" cried Jardine, his thoughts flying at once to Ida.

"Oh, come now, that's very well done, but I guess you suspected it months ago when you got out of it so neatly."

"You are mistaken," said Jardine haughtily. "I suspected nothing, and I don't understand to what you refer."

"To your engagement," replied Mr. Talbot, too excited to be abashed by the other's manner. "That old scamp has had me to the tune of more thousands than I care to think about, but, thank my stars, I am still a free man and there it ends. We've both of us reason to congratulate ourselves."

"Keep your congratulations for your own affairs and leave mine alone," said Jardine contemptuously, then turning on his heel he walked away. His thoughts were in a tumult, but one idea was clear: Ida must be protected from annoyance.

He bought a paper, but learnt nothing more than the bald facts which he already knew.

Acting on the spur of the moment, he hailed a hansom, and was driven to Berkeley Square. He asked for Mrs. Grace, and after some hesitation was admitted.

The poor woman's eyes were swollen, and she trembled with nervousness as she received him with an assumption of self-possession.

"Mrs. Grace, you and I were always friends," said Jardine, grasping her hand firmly in his, "and I have come to offer my services to you and to Miss Ludlow. Make use of me in any way you like, no matter how."

"I don't know what you or any one can do for us, I am sure, thank you all the same. But—oh, everything is so terrible!" and she burst again into tears.

Jardine stayed with her some time, doing what he could to console her. Ida, he learned, was in her room, being kept quiet by the doctor's orders.

Mr. Ludlow was never brought to account for his misdeeds. Long ago he had foreseen this day, and had laid his plans accordingly. How much money he had taken was never accurately known, but he left little behind him but inextricable confusion.

As far as possible, Jardine kept from Ida the details of her father's career. In

the whole miserable business there was only one thing he noted with pleasure, and that was how unconsciously she followed her aunt's lead, and turned to him at every point for help, for comfort, for advice.

With sensitive horror, both the ladies shrank from coming into contact with the outside world, and no one but himself knew how much Jardine saved them. As soon as possible he took them to a quiet little spot in Brittany, where their story was unknown, and where they could for a time live forgotten, and he hoped forgetting. Fortunately, Mrs. Grace's modest income had been so secured that her brother's greedy hands had been unable to grasp it, and but for this they would have been perfectly destitute.

During the many months Jardine was working for her, coming and going, and seeing her even after she had left England as often as he could, not a word had been spoken on the subject of their old engagement or its sudden rupture. Yet in this time of sorrow, when conventionality falls from people like a mask, they grew to know each other as they never could have done under ordinary circumstances.

Jardine found himself forgetting the reason of his rejection, and again putting on high this girl whom he had never really ceased to love. As for Ida, she found her mind but the battle-ground for conflicting feelings. She had always loved Jardine, and never so much as now, but while instinct prompted her to believe that he must be all that he seemed, she could not banish from her memory words of her father's which branded her lover with indelible infamy.

Summer had come round again, and nearly two years had passed since the day when each had vowed to love the other till death, and beyond the grave.

Again they were alone together, but divided by many a bitter memory and sorrow. The soft lap-lap of the waves on the beach on which they sat made a gentle accompaniment to their conversation; a conversation which had grown desultory and fitful, as it will with people whose hearts are full of thoughts they dare not utter.

"Sometimes lately, you look at me as though you were puzzled; what is it?" asked Jardine, turning suddenly and catching her eyes fixed on him.

Ida hesitated for a moment, and then she said: "I am wondering why you are so good to us."

"Surely that is not a thing to wonder at. I have never altered, Ida, and what I have done has been for love of you."

Jardine spoke simply and quietly, without any particular hope, but rather as one who desired not to worry her with protestations which might be unwelcome.

Ida knitted her brows together, and looked at him again with puzzled enquiry.

"I do not know what to believe," she said slowly.

"About what?" he asked.

"Did you never really suspect why I broke off our engagement?" she queried in turn.

"Was there any other reason than the one you gave me?"

She did not answer, but with averted face began pulling some seaweed from the rock on which she sat.

He took hold of her hand and repeated his question.

"I did it because you blackmailed my father," she said, almost in a whisper.

"What!" he cried, letting go her hand in his astonishment, and springing to his feet.

"Was it not true?" she said, with quivering lips. Either way it was bad for her; if true it proved her lover's disgrace, if false it placed her father in a still more despicable light.

"Good heavens! my poor little girl!" ejaculated Jardine, seating himself again by her side. "Now tell me exactly all he said."

"He told me that you had discovered some youthful peccadillo—those were his words—some youthful peccadillo of his which would cause him keen annoyance if talked about, and he had been weak enough to bribe you to hold your tongue, besides allowing you the run of his house; that finding too late that I had grown to—love you, he had not interfered, but that you had shown yourself in your true colours by declining to let him settle any money on me, because you intended secretly to bleed him of the sum for your own purposes. At that my father, having first bound me to secrecy, determined to tell me the whole truth, and by making your obstinacy a pretext, break off our engagement."

"But," gasped Jardine, "what a baby you must have been to believe such a farrago of nonsense!"

"I dare say," she said meekly, "but he showed me a letter of yours asking for one hundred and fifty pounds."

"He might have shown you several," said Jardine, "but probably the others made some mention of the purpose to which the money was to be put."

Then gently and tenderly, sparing the absent man as much as possible, Jardine told her the story of his father's ruin; of how he had tracked Mr. Ludlow down, and spared him for her sake; of the use he had made of the sums of money obtained from Mr. Ludlow; and of his own absolute refusal to participate in a shilling of the money acquired in so doubtful a manner.

By the time he had finished, Ida's face was hidden in her hands, and Jardine scarcely knew what to say by way of comfort.

"My dear," he said, "you must not take this to heart; rather is it not a good thing that these mists are cleared away, and that now we can bury the past for ever, and look forward to a new and happier future?"

"You have been so shamefully treated, that I wonder you can bear to look at me," she said.

"On the contrary, I want to look at you all my life," he answered.

"Can you ever really forgive me for behaving so badly?"

"I have more to forgive than that."

She looked at him with startled, enquiring eyes.

"There is that flirtation with Talbot to be explained, you know. I heard all about it, though I never saw you."

"You need not be jealous. My father was always urging me to be civil to him, so that I was obliged to tolerate him."

"You are sure you never really cared about him?" persisted Jardine.

"I am sure that if I had never met you, I should never have known what love is," she said, and her answer dispelled the last cloud from Jardine's life.

THE SECOND PLACE.

By ESMÉ STUART.

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CHAPTER I.

COUNT JOZSI and Count Felix Kaplinski were strikingly unlike as they stood side by side in the doorway of Count Balinski's large reception hall, in which the guests were at this moment dancing a lively mazurka. This evening the brothers were, for a wonder, enjoying the same scene, and

both were admiring the two belles of Warsaw, Doris and Marya Balinski. It was an open secret in this year of 186— that these two were the most favoured among the suitors of the beautiful sisters.

"This evening shall decide my fate, Felix," said the light-hearted Jozsi, "and I advise you to try your luck at the same time."

"I have every intention of doing so," answered Felix gravely, as his eyes followed a soft cloud of white muslin which periodically passed before him.

"Suppose the old Count says no to us?" suggested Jozsi.

"Then I shall remain unmarried. The next dance is at hand, Jozsi; you had better go and seek your partner."

"If I were to stand and look on all the evening as you do, Felix, I should be mad with jealousy," replied Jozsi, laughing and moving off. "Your grave face, however, would frighten the bees from any flower if you stood by, so I doubt if the lively Doris will say yes."

When the ball was over, Count Balinski went to seek his two daughters in the small drawing-room, where they were eagerly talking of their partners with their aunt who had brought them up. The old man's face wore a slightly troubled expression, though at the same time a smile parted his lips as he looked at the two girls whose beauty was the talk of the town. He had every reason to be a proud father, for Doris at this moment looked like some sea-nymph in her white and silver dress. Doris was her father's darling, for though Marya was very nearly as beautiful she was much more shy and retiring than her lively sister.

"Well, children, I hope you have enjoyed your ball," said the Count. "I should prefer a quieter life, for such mad freaks always bring misfortune."

"And what misfortune makes you smile, little father?" said Doris, linking her hands round her father's arm. "It can't be a very serious one." Marya blushed as if she were a little conscious of the coming misfortune.

"This is the second time during the month that I have had to face somebody's lovers."

"Mine or Marya's, dear father?" said Doris, laughing.

"It is a double misfortune; but I must treat all these men alike, and send them about their business."

"And suppose we tried to guess the names?" said Doris.

"Fie, Doris!" said her aunt. "A Balinski does not throw herself at a suitor's head."

"Would it be better to say 'yes' blindly, dear aunt?" retorted the niece.

"Don't scold the child," said the Count, kissing the forehead over which the soft hair curled like miniature foam-waves. "Two suitors are persistent in their wish to win you, Doris; how am I to decide?"

"That is amusing. Now, dear aunt, have you not often boasted to us of your lovers; why must Marya and I be less fortunate? But Marya is wiser than I am, she will have a larger choice."

"At present my Marya has but one; but he, too, will take no refusal."

Marya's flush told plainly she knew the name of her lover.

"As for you, Doris, Prince Aivazowsky, the Russian, declares——"

Doris suddenly drew herself up like a wave that rises before striking the rocky shore.

"Never," she said, as she clenched her right hand. "I am a Polish nobleman's daughter. But what is the name of the other lover, papa?"

"Felix Kaplinski says——"

"What does Felix say?" Doris pretended to smooth down the soft muslin of her bodice, which looked like the plumage of a dove.

"Ah! Felix is like himself—proud, domineering, immovable. He says——"

"I have no patience with Felix's absurdities," said the aunt.

"Well, Felix says?" repeated Doris.

"That you must marry him."

Aunt Anna elevated head, eyes, and hands.

"And you answered, papa?"

"That no Balinski had ever done anything for a must."

Doris laughed again, such a joyous, ringing, soft laugh, which was terribly infectious.

"Well, then, that is a settled thing, papa. I shall be the first Balinski who does something for a must. In this case I shall be original."

"Indeed, papa, she must not marry him," says Marya eagerly, though in her sweet, low tones. "Papa, say no. Don't you see that she does not understand him? Jozsi says that his brother does not love Doris as much as——"

But Doris soon stopped her sister's words with kisses.

"Hush, you dear, foolish thing! We see

how Jozsi easily turns you round his little finger with his fine phrases. You and papa both know very well that I love Felix better than anybody in the world, and neither of you will say no to him. Besides, I know you quite well, papa; I believe that both these lovers are now waiting for us in the library, and that you have already said yes. Speak the truth, cunning little father."

The old Count laughed and his sister protested.

"Anyhow, Doris, I expect you to say no to Felix. It is quite true, he is too proud."

"How badly you pretend, papa! Your heart tells you I will marry no one but Felix. You might as well expect Marya to accept Vacslav Brozik as——"

"Well, well, come along. Modern days are bad days. Young people manage their parents. Ah, Doris, I wish you would have married that rich Englishman last year, and that he had taken you right out of our poor country."

Ten minutes later Doris was alone with Felix in the big library, for the impetuous Jozsi had disappeared with his Marya into the empty dancing-room, whilst the old Count had gone back to his sister to talk over the inevitable double wedding.

In the library the fire burnt low, for it was late. A suspended lamp swung gently to and fro, and the deep shadows lay athwart the far corners of the room. It was but this very partial light which served to illuminate the face that had the power to fascinate Doris. Her lover held her two hands in his, and for a few moments gazed at her in silence; at last he said:

"Doris, you have come to say yes."

"Yes," said Doris, almost under her breath. Her lover had not even kissed her, and she, this Doris who was admired by so many, would, had she dared, have fallen at his feet.

"Do you know what your 'yes' means, Doris? Do you know that I love you with a love strong and powerful, such as all the Kaplinski possess; that I would die for you without a murmur; that every hair of your head is sacred to me; that I have never looked at another woman since love for you entered into my heart when I was a mere lad? Do you know that, Doris? Tell me."

"Yes, Felix," she answered, "I know it."

"Do you know, too, that your happiness

is precious to me; that you need sunshine and that, as my wife, you shall have it even though I am grave and silent as a true Pole must be; but that I wish you to be happy in your own way. I shall love you only the more because of your bright laughter. You will never have to fear my jealousy—a hateful word between a man and his wife—because the woman I love, Doris, could not betray me. Do you understand?"

"Oh, Felix, the woman who loves you could not be false to you. I have never loved but you ever since the day when I was a girl, and you took my hand and asked me if I were a true woman. Felix, it was enough; you have known my heart was yours, though you have never said a word."

"Yes," he said, almost humbly. "Yes, Doris, I have known it, and it has made me what I am, strong in love."

"You never doubted me, did you?"

"Never once. But stop, Doris; that is not enough. Before we pledge ourselves I must tell you—you know it; but once, and once only we must speak of it to each other, then never again. Because I love you it is a secret between us, a secret of which you must not even think. You know how I love you, if no one else does; but, Doris, you know I love another still better. I love her with a love which is my life. I must do her bidding always; for her I must sacrifice what I love next best—you, Doris."

There was a low sob heard in the room.

"Hush—hush, Felix. I know it. You love her best, you are hers; but after her I am yours. I am content. I would rather be your second love, your slave, Felix, than the spoilt darling of any other."

"See, till I die her name must be always part of myself." He hastily pulled up his velvet coat-sleeve, and in the dim light displayed some tattooed letters on his arm. Doris stooped down and kissed the name of his beloved and her rival.

"Poland!" she said. "Felix, I know it."

"But when I am dead, then let them engrave the name of Doris upon me. Now, my love, it is not too late to draw back. Do you repent? I have hidden nothing from you."

Doris raised herself on tiptoe, and put her two arms round her lover's neck, and laid her head upon his breast.

"Felix, there is no drawing back; I am quite happy. I am your slave—and here."

Then, and then only did Felix kiss his love's pure forehead, and Doris knew that all the love her hero could give her was hers, and she would not have exchanged it for a crown and a king.

When the four lovers met again, Doris was all sunshine and smiles, and no one but Felix could have guessed her capable of the scene she had just gone through. Shy, blushing Marya and her Jozsi had behaved in a much more extravagant manner, and as the sisters retired to bed she exclaimed:

"Doris, darling, I wish your lover were more like mine. Felix is so cold, so reserved, I don't believe he loves you half enough."

Doris only laughed as she answered:

"And I believe yours loves you too much—to last. At least he loves you too much to love Poland enough."

CHAPTER II.

SUCH a fête had never before been witnessed in the castle of the Kaplinski, just outside Warsaw; and how the neighbourhood gossiped when the invitations were sent round! By her own dependents the Countess Doris was adored, but evil tongues enjoy poisoning or trying to poison the sweetest lives. These evil speakers said the Count led a miserable life; if he appeared at the splendid parties given by his young wife it was but to look gloomily jealous, and, indeed, said they, she preferred giving her entertainments without his help. That her conduct was suspicious was easily proved, for Count Jozsi and his wife no longer visited at the castle; but the proverbial beauty of the Countess gathered together a host of adventurers.

Count Kaplinski's wife might be slandered, but her invitations were eagerly sought after, and her friends knew well enough that, with all her merriment and her balls and parties, Doris was as proud as the Kaplinski themselves, and what more could be said?

"Prince Otto, you are not dancing. That is not allowed here. I have a young cousin who dances divinely; let me introduce her to you."

"I would rather wait till——" began the Prince, with a look of admiration.

"Don't wait for me, if that is your desire. I am engaged for every dance."

"Every dance?"

"Yes, when I dance them."

"And who is the fortunate individual?"

"My cousin, Stanislas Radakowski."

"A mere youth from college," said the Prince, with a touch of scorn.

"Yes, that makes him all the more charming. It is his birthday, and he loves dancing passionately, and so do I. He does not think of his partner, only of his steps, so to dance with Stanislas is heaven!"

Doris had been married a year. A year! It seemed at once like a day and a lifetime. Every moment had seemed precious to her, even though many of them had not been spent with Felix. On the contrary, he was much away; but his wife never asked him any questions as to his movements. Her trust was perfect; she knew that, when it was possible, he was with her.

This very morning he had gravely kissed her lips, and she had trembled a little. He did that so seldom. He had said but two words, but they had echoed all day in her ears: "Doris, my wife." That from Felix meant such worlds of trust and love. She—light-hearted, merry Doris—had succeeded in making Felix happy, and that was enough happiness for her. All others were as trampled dust compared with Felix.

Young Stanislas suddenly recalled her from her reverie.

"Cousin Doris, just one more dance with you. You dance nearly as well as Bettina."

"Who may she be?"

"My Italian master's daughter. She is——"

"Silly boy! She is not as beautiful as I am, and cannot dance half as well. I will give you this dance on condition that you do not flirt again with Bettina. Remember you are a Balinski."

Stanislas hesitated, then he looked at Doris.

"Cousin Doris, you are right; I have been a fool. Well, let us dance."

It was half-past eleven when Stanislas went to cool himself in a conservatory, and overheard these scraps of conversation:

"The Rzad has decreed it, and that council takes no excuse.—The Stiletcziki are chosen by lot, there is no appeal against that choice.—No one knows friends from foes; the Russians have spies everywhere.—Yes, but Nieroslowski is biding his time, in the meanwhile his friends must do the work.—And suffer for it. Well, my patriotism does not go so far.—Then the flight is a high one this time?—So they say."

Just at a quarter to twelve Stanislas pushed his way through the crowd till he was close to Doris.

"Cousin Doris," he whispered. "Come here."

"Where?"

"In the new conservatory. A man wants to see you there."

"A man! Let him wait." But Stanislas took her arm as if to waltz with her.

"Hush, say nothing, but follow me."

She followed him, clenching her right hand, a way she had of showing her secret displeasure. What man dared send for her?

"Here he is," said Stanislas; then he whispered: "He is one of the Stiletcziki."

Doris became calm and composed. She had once before seen this short, dark individual walking with her husband.

"Speak quickly," she said; "my guests are waiting for me."

"The Count sends you this note. You are to read it alone in my presence."

"Go, Stanislas," she said firmly. "I must do exactly as Felix tells me. He will be back very soon now. Why does he write?"

She unfolded a tiny note and read:

"Poland. Remember—we have failed. I am taken sword in hand. Reward the messenger. Doris—my wife."

This was all, and the messenger had risked his life in bringing it to her.

Doris stood quite still for a moment as if she had been a lovely statue. There was not one tinge of colour on her cheeks, and her hands were like ice to the touch.

Then suddenly life rushed back. She raised her hands, unclasped a diamond brooch from her bosom, and plunged the pin into her soft white arm; then she let the red drops fall on the other half of the paper. Tearing this off, she handed it and the brooch to the man before her.

"Take them; the brooch is valuable. Give this paper to my husband if it is possible. He will understand. Stanislas!" she called, and Stanislas came hastily to her side.

"Cousin Doris, I know; the news has come. Don't go back there; all the people are hastening away. They are afraid of being found here."

Doris actually smiled.

"So much the better, I need not dismiss them. Take this key of the small back gate and let out the messenger; then leave me. I shall go to Warsaw to-night."

But the messenger stopped her.

"For the love of your husband do not show yourself in Warsaw. The trial is taking place this evening; there will be no justice shown, there is none for our unhappy country."

Doris waved him away imperiously. Even before she got back to the hall it was empty, for to be found in the house of a conspirator might mean death or crime. For a moment the young Countess stood alone in the big hall full of lights and flowers, and, looking up, she saw her own figure reflected in a large mirror, round which beautiful exotics were grouped. She raised her arms and clasped her hands over her head as if to ease some physical pain, but in truth she was quickly making her plans and deciding what line to follow. Suddenly she dropped her arms and murmured almost unconsciously, "Doris, my wife." She had no more time for thought, for she had much to do. Running upstairs with the light step that for the last year had sounded like music to Felix, she rang for her maid.

"Make haste, Nicoline, fetch me your dark pelisse; no one must know me."

"Ah, madam," said Nicoline, bursting into tears, "we know—every one knows the noble Count is a prisoner."

"The Count has done his duty, and now I must do mine. Come with me; we have much to do. If influence can avail, there is yet hope. If my father were well—but he is ill, and has lost his memory—he cannot help me."

By ten o'clock the next morning the fate of the conspirators was known. They were to receive no mercy. The suspected ringleader was not to be found, but three of the foremost members of the secret council, among whom was Felix, were to be led to one of the public squares and there hanged on a gibbet. They were to walk to the place of execution bareheaded, in their shirts, and a black veil thrown over them, in this manner undergoing the same death as a parricide.

"Nicoline, do you understand?" said Doris, for one moment breaking down. "They are going to kill my husband! They will not even grant him a heroic death; they will not listen to me. I have but one hope left, I must go to Prince Aivazowsky."

"You will not go to him, dear mistress!" said Nicoline, who had always lived with Doris.

"I must go. Bring me my velvet dress."

and make me beautiful, Nicoline. The wife of Felix Kaplinski must be fittingly dressed."

Nicoline had but to obey, and very soon the two women again started for Warsaw in a closed carriage.

It was a lovely summer's morning. The Prince was reclining in the verandah of his country house—once the residence of a Polish nobleman—when his servant announced that the Countess Kaplinski desired to speak to him. The Prince rose quickly, and threw away his cigar. He had guessed Doris would come, and he was going to revenge himself for the past. He walked into his reception-room, and found her standing by a large arm-chair. Her hand was resting on the back of it, and she looked very beautiful, with a bright colour in her cheeks.

"You know all," said Doris; "I do not, for the Count never spoke to me of his affairs, but I have come to you, Prince, to ask you to save him. You know he is a patriot whose name will live; you cannot let him die. You must speak to the Czar; you must."

Perhaps Doris had never looked more lovely than at this moment. The Prince resolutely turned his eyes away.

"Forgive plain speaking, Countess Kaplinski, but I cannot save your husband. He is a traitor to the Czar. If you had been wise you would have kept him out of politics, and for your sake most men would discard visions."

"I married him because he would not discard them," said Doris proudly.

The Prince shrugged his shoulders.

"Then you must accept the consequence."

Doris, with a spontaneous motion, held out her hands as if to emphasize her words.

"No, I cannot, I cannot, Prince. Listen. You said once you loved me. Was it me you loved, or merely my beauty? Don't you see that I loved Felix with a love that prevented my thinking of any one else? If you had married me, you would have married a woman without a soul. My soul must have gone wherever Felix was. It is with him now; it is in his prison; I see him as plainly as I see you; I see his dear face, brave and resolute as ever. He is thinking of me, but he thinks first of Poland. I have told you this because you will understand. You have a noble nature, though sometimes you hide it away. I must go, I have much

to do, but my pleading will ring day and night in your ears as long as Felix is alive; and if he dies, and you have done nothing for him, then, Prince Aivazowsky, you and I can never meet again, not even in heaven."

The Prince stooped and kissed her hand, as was customary, but he said nothing as Doris retired, to find her faithful maid waiting for her below.

"Now, Nicoline, take me to your mother. No one must know where I am."

Nicoline's mother was a washerwoman just outside the town. The carriage drove right through Warsaw, crossing the great Place Sigismund, adorned with its colossal statue, and going towards the Zameck, that royal castle overlooking the town, paused at the foot of the hill. There the two women got down, and now no one would have recognised Doris attired in a peasant's petticoat, and with her beautiful face stained with walnut-juice and hidden by a hood.

When they reached the washerwoman's miserable dwarek, Nicoline introduced the Countess, and bade her mother keep the secret.

"Do not be afraid of me," said Doris, with a smile. "I have come to work for a week. I must wash and iron, so that at the end of that time no one shall recognise my hands, or suspect I am Doris Kaplinski, and then I shall mix with the people and see him again if——"

She was not brave enough to finish. Deep down in her heart she knew there was hardly a shadow of hope for Felix, but she must see him once more.

So she patiently stood at the wash-tub and learnt to scrub. Nicoline dared not stay all day, because of the neighbours, but she came every evening to undress her mistress, and to make her as comfortable as was possible in the cottage; but Doris seemed only anxious about the roughness of her hands, and how to procure old clothes from the Jews' quarter. The women who came into the dwarek gossiped about the prisoners without lowering their voices, for they had the impression that the new girl helper was deaf and dumb. She never spoke, so the idea was easy to keep up. For Doris the days dragged on, sometimes slowly, at other times the minutes seemed to fly. All night, lying in her poor bed, she would moan softly to herself; sometimes she tried to pray, but there was only one word she could say—"Felix."

The crowd gathered thickly along the streets where the procession of patriots going to their doom was known to be coming. The officials had placed mounted soldiers to push back the too eager citizens, but like flies on a dead carcass they gathered again immediately. Foremost among them was Doris, looking like some gipsy peasant. She could not be driven away. The awful gibbet erected in the Square of Sigismund fascinated her, for she must see him once more, even if only for a moment; even if only to call him by his name. He must look at her; he would know her through any disguise.

Suddenly a murmur arose. They were coming; the procession of shame was approaching. Doris pressed forward, heedless of the rough men who elbowed her, heedless even of the cries of "For shame, for shame! Brothers, let us rescue them."

"Clear the place!" cried an officer, dashing up on horseback, and speaking to an aide-de-camp. "If they attempt a rescue we shall be ruined."

There was a stampede. No crowd can withstand horses' hoofs. Driven back by force into a side street, Doris paused for an instant, then rushed forward again. She pushed her way to the front row; there she half saw some black moving figures, and held out her arms towards them, but a fierce voice called out:

"Back, there, impudent hussy! Traitors want no sympathy!"

"Let me go, let me go," cried Doris frantically. "I must see them."

"Must!" He rode straight at her, and with a cry Doris fell; but as she fell she caught sight of a tall figure draped in black, a rope round his neck, and bare, bruised feet.

"Felix!" she called, and again she stretched out her arms, and then remembered no more, for she fainted dead away.

A long time after some one fell over her, and she opened her eyes.

"What's this? Get up, girl. What, drunk at midday? For shame!"

"For Heaven's sake, tell me, is it over? Am I too late?"

"Too late! Over! Why, yes, an hour ago. The brave men never flinched; they mounted the steps of the scaffold without a word."

"All of them?"

"Ay. Count Kaplinski was the last and the proudest. He gazed round as if looking for——"

Doris stared hard at the speaker.

"Go on," she said.

"He wanted to speak, but the executioner seized him."

"How dared he touch him!"

Doris's lips were deadly pale.

"The hangman gave the sign——"

Doris rose to her feet and proudly raised her head as she said:

"I know the Count never uttered a word, he never made one struggle. You lie if you say the contrary!"

"That's true, never a word, but at the moment of death——"

"He called for his wife and she was not there. Oh, Heaven!"

"I couldn't hear what he called for, but suddenly the Russian Prince Aivazovsky rode up and waved a letter to stop the execution. The Czar had reprieved the prisoner—not death, but exile to Siberia. Faith, I wouldn't have changed."

"Not death! Not death!" cried Doris, throwing back her hood. "Say it again."

"Yes, not death; but they say the Count murmured: 'It was easier to come here than to go there'—but, merciful heavens, what is the matter?"

"Not death—not death, but—but——" Doris fell back, still muttering, "not death, but——"

"Siberia," repeated the stranger.

Happily Nicoline, who had been looking everywhere for her mistress, ran up at this moment crying out:

"Have you heard, dear mistress, have you heard?"

Doris actually laughed.

"Quick, Nicoline, give me your arm. Do you hear, girl—not death but exile! What is exile when a man has a wife! He knows that, Nicoline. Say it again."

CHAPTER III.

It was bitterly cold, and the chain of prisoners was long. As they walked, their chains rattled and clanked against each other. Occasionally there was a long track of blood fallen from wounded hands and feet. They were well guarded by soldiers, who hounded them on with blows and curses, when they themselves were feeling chilly. Sometimes the living chain had to drag a dead companion in its midst till the next station was reached. At each post the soldiers were changed for fear of treason, or in case one of them possessed a human heart. The escape of any prisoner was death to the chief guard, so an escape

was very rare. From Varsovie to Vakutsk the track is long, a trail of horror, a pathway of disgrace to common humanity. But in that very pathway, a few hours behind the prisoners, Doris, disguised as a peasant, and accompanied by the faithful Nicoline, followed her husband. They did not dare approach nearer, and they would not lose sight of the path. At each dreary station or fortress Doris said:

"Felix has been here; he has seen these walls. Does he guess I am following him?"

Doris had sold her jewels, and brought with her all the ready money she could procure at a moment's notice. Her fortune and his were confiscated; she was a beggar now, following a beggar, but that did not trouble her very much. Felix was alive. At times the two women found the inn guarded by a soldier, for somewhere within was a prisoner who could not be dragged forward. Sometimes this laggard had become a raving lunatic, but the end was never far off when they were thus left behind. The first time Doris found this laggard she had to face another horror. At the next station she might hear that it was Felix who could not proceed, or rather not Felix but Number ninety-nine, for by dint of bribing she had discovered this number.

At length the journey was over. Doris never remembered how long it lasted, but all the weary time she had kept a few hours behind the trail of prisoners. Never once had she given in, and now she had come to a stand-still, and could look at the gloomy fortress where the political prisoners were to be incarcerated, and from which, by-and-by, they were daily to be driven out like cattle, to work in the mines or in the forest.

The first night Doris and Nicoline found shelter in a miserable kwass shop. The master of it gave them a back room which was dark and dirty. He even warned them that women were not allowed in the place, unless they had some occupation. The officials would soon find it out and make enquiries.

"We are looking for work; but, indeed, little father, we must rest a short while," and then Doris gave him one of her smiles. "Tell me what hour the prisoners come out of the fortress?"

The man looked at her from under his small brows, and understood.

"That is easily known, for when they come out I lodge a soldier here for fear of any escape on this side. It is not safe for you to lodge here; but my cousin wants

two helpers in the bakehouse. She bakes the bread for the prisoners. If you like I will speak to her."

Doris had a way of winning hearts; and now she pressed a small diamond earring into his hand.

"Holy Mother!" he murmured, turning pale with fear. "What good is this to me? We must take no bribes." But Doris insisted, and the man earned it well this time.

His cousin took the two strangers into her service, and asked no questions.

One day the kwass seller ran into the bakehouse.

"Lend me the services of your girl, Sacha. I cannot get any help to-day."

And Doris went.

"To-day the prisoners are coming out, lady," he whispered. "You must stand at the door and help to wash glasses. You must use your eyes, not your tongue. That is all I can do for you. By-and-by they will be less strict, and this governor is not a hard man as governors go."

Doris washed glass after glass as if in a dream, forming but one resolution. She must be brave; she must not run him into danger.

Suddenly the great gate of the fortress swung back, there were sounds of chains, and as the prisoners passed out they struck up a sad Polish national song, for, as a great privilege, they might sing on the way to the mines.

Doris forced herself to look up. Her heart beat so wildly that the blood seemed to rush to her eyes and to blur her sight, but in a moment she controlled herself.

There he was, the second in the line; Felix, her husband, her hero!

She dropped a glass, and he turned his head towards her. Their eyes met, the colour suffused his pale face, his lips moved, and Doris knew that he said "Doris, my wife," and she—she wanted to stretch out her arms to him and to fall at his feet; but she only went on washing glasses.

That day she went home quite beside herself with joy.

For six months she had that occasional joy. She was not always spared, but when their eyes met she came bounding back to her servitude with a happy laugh.

After a time she found out her laugh made Felix smile, so she laughed when they met, and she knew that Felix for one moment felt happy; then her own happiness seemed almost too great for words.

Gradually things improved. Somehow

the story of her devotion leaked out, and it found favour with the governor. She obtained leave to rent a tiny cabin on the settlement. It was on the road to the mines, so she could see Felix regularly. She began to make soup to sell to the convicts as they passed by, for now and then they were allowed to buy food; and in the wooden bowl she handed to Felix she sometimes dropped a tiny pellet of paper, which Felix kept in his mouth till he could read it unseen. These were red-letter days, even though he would never answer her. He dared not, for her sake.

Life became quite exciting then, for Doris had many letters to write; petitions to send for Felix—petitions which he would never have allowed her to send, had he known. Nicoline had gone home to her mother, who was ill. She had been able to send her home in grander style than she came; dear good Nicoline, Marya must look after her. She was now alone in her cabin; but she saw Felix every day, and she lived on hope. It was almost sweet.

Poor Doris, she lived on hope many days. The case of Count Felix, they said, was one which the clemency of the Czar was not allowed to touch; but still Doris wrote and petitioned. Now and then Marya begged she might send her some money, but Doris never would allow this. Marya's husband was a traitor to the cause; besides, she, Doris, was the wife of Felix, and would not live on charity. Then, money could do so little for her. She had learnt to make such nice things, and the settlers were glad to become her customers. Some of these settlers were released convicts who yet might not go home; and Doris became the angel of the place, and as safe in the dreary plain as if she had been guarded by a regiment.

Then better times dawned, though never an answer to her petitions.

A new governor was appointed, and he heard her story. She no longer disguised herself now, though she still dressed as a peasant, not being able to afford anything better. Felix looked so happy when he saw her sweet face, and the few words they exchanged were chiefly about their looks.

"My heart's darling," she whispered, or sometimes wrote, "you are pale to-day; are you ill?" And he would smile and say: "When I see the colour in your face, Doris, I feel well again."

Doris was not taken in; she knew the iron had entered into his soul.

Five years had passed in hope, and then

one day a great joy came to them. On the great fête days the prisoners of five years' standing might see their friends alone for a few hours. Doris thought she should go mad with joy the night before the event took place; but her heart was cruelly torn when she was ushered into the prisoner's cell.

Still, their first meeting alone, how sweet it was! They could not speak, and for a few minutes Doris cried a little, as Felix gathered her to his arms and whispered:

"Doris, my wife, it was for her—for Poland. Can you forgive me?"

"I am satisfied," she said. "I would not have it otherwise."

The next five years fled much more quickly, and still Doris wrote and wrote. She only asked for freedom, not for money or for lands.

But no answer came.

One day, however, the governor sent for her to his room, and she quickly appeared before him. She was so young still, only twenty-nine, and she looked younger, and oh, so beautiful! The governor wondered, as he looked at her, how she could live this life of hardship.

"Are you the wife of Ninety-nine?" he said roughly.

"I am the wife of Count Felix Kaplinski," she said proudly, and never in the old days had she looked more beautiful.

"We have no titles in Siberia, but I have a letter about Number ninety-nine. Our gracious Czar allows Number ninety-nine to dwell unchained in a separate cabin. The settlement is guarded, you know. Flight is impossible. Further, Number ninety-nine will be allowed to work in the forest instead of in the mine."

Doris laughed, her joy was so great. She knew too much about the mines.

"Thank you," she said. "Doris, the wife of Count Felix, thanks you."

The governor bowed; he was conquered—for the moment, at least.

Felix Kaplinski woke up one day to a new life. It was evening when the soldier struck off his chains near the cabin door, and one said roughly:

"Well, laggard, can't you go on? Come, march; why do you stand stock still like an idiot?"

They gave him a rude push as they walked off. Felix said nothing, but his hand trembled as he knocked at the door.

Doris had not known the hour of his

coming. She had waited for him all day long, and she had sold her last ornament to buy him a feast. Then she waited.

Felix was coming home! Home; he had a home now! She clasped her hands over her heart to stop its beating. Then she knelt down and prayed. It was the first time she had prayed any words in all these ten long years; before this she had knelt, and sometimes she had cried, once or twice she had laughed; but she had never spoken to Heaven till this evening when she was waiting for Felix.

Felix was coming home! He would be, within these poor walls, a free man, free to love her, to call her by her name; and she could kneel by him and kiss the wounds the cruel iron had made. She would comfort him, and she would be merry, oh, so merry! He would say her laugh was his sunshine. She would make up to him for his long suffering. Ten years, ten years. How many weeks was that? How much he had had to bear all that time! He had done it for her, his other love, for Poland. Was not that enough? Felix was a hero; no, the word was too common to be given to such as he. He had never flinched, never wavered, never once complained. He had loved her as truly as only Felix could love. But now all was changed. He would be happy for half the twenty-four hours; he would be free. Very few men were really happy for twelve hours out of every twenty-four, and none of the men who had helped to send Felix could have one minute's ease of mind in the whole day. As for her, she must take care not to think of herself, she must not be selfish. Felix must come first. He would be very weary, he would want time to sit still and think. His dear face lately had been so pale, his dear hands had trembled as she held them, his smile had been forced in order to give her pleasure. He was getting too weary to smile. Oh, she would not mind, she would laugh for them both. The settlement would call her the merry exile. They had done so before now, but they did not know her really; they could not guess all the joy that was in her heart to-day!

When would he come? It was getting late, and it was cold. She heaped up the logs in the stove. Marya's last fête gift was doubly welcome now. Doris only accepted this present on her fête day because it made poor Marya happy, and Felix need not know.

Then suddenly came the expected knock, a feeble knock, a knock as if a ghost had tapped with its shadowy fingers, and Doris flew to the door, bidding herself be quiet for her husband's sake.

"Felix, Felix! you are here. Come in. See, everything is ready for you, my darling. It is your house, our home. Look, isn't it a palace?"

He entered slowly and stood on the threshold of the poor little place, full chiefly of the stove warmth, of the light from the small oil lamp, and of the love of Doris.

Felix shut the door, and slowly walked towards the arm-chair he saw placed by the fire. His once strong, fine, manly form was bent as if with old age. As he sat down he looked timidly round the room without saying a word. Oh, Doris knew, Doris knew. She had made friends with other exiles, other half-released captives. That was the worst of all those long ten years, they had made Felix timid; Felix, who had once had no power of understanding the word fear!

She knelt down beside him and began taking off his thick boots. Her fingers were hard now, for the Doris of old days could not have unlaced these strips of cowhide; but this Doris could do so, and she was glad of it, glad that she was strong as well as gentle, glad that she knew the meaning of work, of poverty, and of sorrow. The Doris of nineteen could have had no part in the Felix that now sat beside the stove. She took his cold feet in her arms and rubbed them warm, and kissed them where the iron manacles had once galled, then hardened, the flesh. Then she ran to fetch his slippers and a rug, and laughingly kissed each of his rough fingers, from which all manly beauty had fled.

And Felix let her do it all and said nothing; but Doris knew that he could not yet speak. He must have time to think.

Then she again rose and drew the little deal table close to him, and ran singing into the tiny kitchen to bring him some of her famous soup; and on the table she laid two plates, and two wooden spoons, and some hot kwass and roasted potatoes long ago stored for this very occasion. All the while she talked on, any wild rubbish that came into her head, and laughed over the want of some old luxuries.

"But look, my Felix, I have got two

of everything, one for you and one for me; and what more can we want? And look, dear heart, here is a letter for you, directed to you; it came enclosed in one of my letters."

She put it close beside him, and his poor numb fingers touched it strangely. He looked at the direction, half shook his head, and did not open it.

"Number ninety-nine," he murmured. He had never had a letter all these long years, and it could not be meant for him. But Doris knew. By-and-by he would understand that—that he was Count Felix Kaplinski. After a time she said:

"Now, Felix, all is ready. Will you ask the blessing? Why, you—we haven't sat down to such a dinner for—years, have we? Do you remember Luskina, our cook? Clever as he was, was his soup like mine? I can compete with any one now! Taste it, dear Felix."

He took a spoonful, then looked round, and then he took another.

"It is very good, Doris; better than Luskina's soup."

"Didn't I tell you so, Felix?" and Doris laughed her old merry laugh, and Felix smiled. Oh, Heaven! how that smile did her good!

Afterwards Doris cleared away the meal and came and sat down by Felix, close beside him on a stool, and she put his hand round her neck and kissed it till the kisses seemed to enter into his soul, and he returned the pressure.

Doris felt her heart beat wildly then, for Felix was beginning to live.

Suddenly the cat, who had been sleeping soundly, woke up and stretched himself and gazed curiously at the intruder, arching his back at him. This cat had been Doris's only companion for so long that it felt jealous of the stranger, and Doris explained the fact to Felix, and he, stooping down, lifted the animal into his lap and stroked its warm coat.

"Is it your cat, Doris?" he said.

"No, no, Felix, not mine, it is our cat."

"Our cat," he replied. "Do you think they will let us keep it?"

Doris nearly cried at these words, but to prevent herself doing this she jumped up again and began preparations for going to bed. The big bed in the corner there, she had bought it little by little. First the wooden frame, then the straw mattress, then the feather bed, all with a view to Felix's first night at home.

"Felix," she said, "Felix, my darling,

you must come to bed and rest. Don't think of anything but what is for your good. You have been wanting rest a long time."

"Yes, a long time," he said.

"But it will be all the sweeter now. There wasn't a bed like this one in all——"

She paused, for she saw her husband's eyes fixed on her as if waiting for the next word, so she coughed and never finished the sentence.

Darkness fell on the settlement of exiles, and the wide snow mantle over Siberia glistened in the moonlight. The great forest rested from its labours, and the rivers were silenced by the embraces of the ice-maidens.

In the exile's cabin the moonlight passed in through a slit in the curtain, and played upon the big bed which Doris had bought piece by piece. It lighted up the face of Felix and woke him. He looked round the room and noticed the hanging lamp still burning, and the truth flashed suddenly upon him. He was in a home of his own. He turned in his bed and saw Doris, who had fallen asleep; and then Felix became conscious that she was firmly clasping one of his hands. The cat snored softly by the stove, and he remembered. A great joy entered into his heart, and he called his wife softly by her name.

"Doris!"

Doris did not wake, for she had been so weary with work.

"Doris!" he called again, and sat up a little to gaze on her face.

Still she did not wake, and then the exile released his hand and slowly pulled up his sleeve, and with his finger traced the tattooed letters on his arm.

"Doris," he called again, and Doris started up.

"Oh, my darling, what is the matter!" she said. "You are at home; no one can hurt you."

"At home; yes—yes. Doris, my wife, look." He held his bare arm towards her.

"Yes, my Felix, I know it. It is the name of her whom you have loved so long—so long, all this time. You have been so true—so true. Oh, Felix, there is no one like you in all the world."

He put his arm round her and realised that she was his. He had not realised it last night; but now his heart beat fast and it seemed to suffocate him.

"Doris."

"Yes, Felix darling."

"When I die let them put your name here, on my heart."

He drew her shining head down upon his breast and gave a little sigh, such a soft, happy, contented little sigh!

"If you please, your Excellency," said the head official at the fortress the next morning, "if you please, Number ninety-nine died last night. They often do when they are liberated. It is best to keep them their full term."

JIM GODDART'S PROMISE.

By the Author of *"Count Paolo's Ring," "The Story of Doris Cairnes,"* etc.

CHAPTER I.

"YES, they are both down with the fever, Jim, both father and sweetheart, and a pretty smart touch of it too, I fancy. I met Miss Pert just now in the street. She could speak to me to-day fast enough when she wanted something," and Miss Belle Sutton, the buxom barmaid who presided over the canteen at Kuranda Camp, tossed her befrizzled head defiantly; "and she told me so, and asked me if there was a doctor in the camp, and when I told her the nearest doctor was at Cronje, four hours' ride off, she had the cheek to ask me to tell her of some one who would go to bring him. Fancy that, Jim, and on Christmas Eve of all nights in the year!"

"What did you say?"

"I laughed at her, of course. 'I don't think the boys would stir out of camp for any one to-night,' I said, 'and certainly not for people like you, who treat everybody like the dust under your feet, and are too high and mighty and virtuous to associate with any of us poor sinners!' I had her there, eh, Jim?"

"Decidedly, my dear. If to love your neighbours is a Christian maxim, to hate your enemies is one of an equally meritorious character, beside being infinitely more attractive to the carnal mind; and people who profess to be better than their neighbours are one's natural enemies," Jim replied placidly. "And what did Miss—Miss Pert say to that?"

"Oh, she looked at me out of her great saucer eyes, and her lips twitched as if she were going to cry—great baby—then, 'Do you really mean that there is no one in all the camp with sufficient humanity to help two sick, perhaps dying, men, and a

helpless girl?' she said. 'That's just as you like to put it, my lady,' I says. 'You've held yourself aloof from us all, and looked down upon us, and now you'll find you can't drop and pick us up again and use us just when you think fit; you haven't a friend in the camp now.' She didn't say anything to that—just coloured up and tossed her head and walked away. I guess she didn't like to hear the plain truths. By the way, Jim, I didn't think of you; you used to be a great friend of theirs at one time."

"Ay, I was when they first came to the camp," Jim replied in his lazy, reflective voice, "before they knew me intimately. When they thoroughly understood the high-toned, exalted nature of my character, they were content to admire it and me from a distance. Give me another whisky, Belle."

Belle laughed as she refilled the empty glass. She glanced with admiring eyes at Jim Goddart as he leaned against the door-post, looking meditatively down the straggling row of wooden shanties and tents of which the camp consisted, and on which the sunset light was shining. She laughed and went on with her idle chatter, and Jim answered mechanically now and then, but he scarcely heard what she said. He was looking intently towards a clump of trees just outside the camp, under which, by the side of a waggon, a tent was pitched. Within that tent he knew the two men of whom Belle had spoken lay, stricken by the terrible fever which a few weeks before had wrought fearful havoc in the little camp. They were lying there suffering, perhaps—for he knew the deadly nature of the fever too well—dying; and the girl who was the daughter of one man and promised wife of the other, was watching by them alone. Somehow, though Jim tried to harden his heart, he did not like to think of it; to picture the blue eyes, which had once smiled so frankly and sweetly into his own, dimmed with tears, aching with long hours of anxious vigil; to imagine that sunny head bowed under the burden of anxiety.

He tried to turn his thoughts to other subjects, but they went back persistently to the time when Mr. Clifton and his daughter Lois, and her lover, Frank Wyverne, first came to the camp. He had made their acquaintance, and had been of some slight service to them on the first evening of their arrival, and they, attracted by the pleasant, courteous manner

which Jim could assume at will, had made him welcome to their shanty. He recalled the pleasant evenings he had spent there, the afternoons when he had returned earlier than usual from work, and as he passed the Cliftons' shanty had lingered under the trees where Lois generally passed the afternoon with her work or book, and spent a pleasant time with her alone. Those quiet tête-à-têtes had been very sweet to him, perilously sweet, considering that Lois was the promised wife of another man, and that even if she had been free she could never be anything to him; as well expect the millennium to come at once, and the lion to lie down with the lamb, as expect Lois—sweet, innocent Lois—to mate with one like him, Jim told himself savagely.

For a week or ten days the friendship, which was so pleasant to all, but especially so to Lois and Jim, had continued, and then one day Mr. Clifton had gone to his daughter, and told her gravely and decidedly that it must cease; that a man who bore the reputation which Jim Goddart had earned for himself, even in a place where the standard of morality was not pitched unduly high, was no fit friend for her.

Lois was too much in awe of her father to rebel, or to make any open remonstrance, and when she ventured to speak to her lover on the subject, and found that he held the same views as her father, she reluctantly submitted to the stern decree which bade her regard Jim Goddart as a stranger. She deserted her seat under the trees, and the next time they met, and he stopped to speak to her, she had hurried on with a slight bend of her head, and flushed cheeks, and averted eyes.

Jim had looked after her, and had first sworn a deep oath to himself, and then laughed harshly; but he was not the man to force his presence where it was unwelcome—he could take a hint as well as any one—so he came no more to the shanty, and on the few occasions when he met Lois had passed her with a distant, courteous bow.

It was better so, he told himself. Sometimes in her presence he was tempted to forget that he was—what he had made himself; to forget that dark time of youthful folly, that moment of madness which had spoiled his life, and brought his father's curse upon his head; to forget all this, and the wild, reckless life to which it had been the prelude. Lois was no fit company for him; like must mate with

like. Let him keep to his own kind; his place was in the bar with the noisy revellers who crowded there after working hours were over, to drink and gamble, not under the soft starlight by the side of that dove-eyed girl, with her sweet face and her low voice.

But though he told himself all this, and mentally acquiesced in the wisdom of Mr. Clifton's decision, he none the less resented it, and had even once or twice, when Miss Clifton's name had been slightly mentioned in his presence, laughed and sneered with the rest, and had been moved the moment afterwards to fierce, unreasoning hatred, both of the one who had made the sneering remark, and of himself, who had laughed at it. Often enough he wished that their paths had never crossed; that he had never known her, never looked into the depth of those blue eyes, or seen the bright flush which sometimes at his eager gaze would rise in her cheeks; never pictured to himself how fair life might be if she had been free to be won, and he had dared to win her. But since this was impossible, and since she had elected that their friendship should come to an untimely end, Jim was too proud to try to alter the decision. A friendship which could so easily, and at the first breath of opposition, be put aside, was not worth keeping. Let it go!

But though he had told this to himself, and had determined to put her altogether out of his life and memory, to go back to his old life and friends, and to be content with Miss Belle Sutton's society, his efforts had not been quite so successful as he could have wished; and now the unexpected news which Belle had given him, had raised a tumult of mingled emotions in his mind. Angry though he was with Lois, and though he had mentally called her fickle and weak, and many another hard name, and sworn to himself that she had only herself to blame, that he would have been a true friend to her if she had not willed it otherwise, he did not like to think of her alone in her trouble; to fancy those blue eyes dim with weeping and watching by the sick men, that sweet face growing pale and haggard with anxiety and sleepless vigils.

"Well, aren't you going down to offer your services to Miss Pert, Jim? She'll be ready enough to welcome you now, in spite of the cold shoulder she's turned to you lately," she said.

Jim looked at her blandly, and smiled.

"I dare say she would," he said slowly. "I guess I'll give her the chance, anyhow." "You will?"

Belle's cheeks flamed, and her eyes flashed with angry surprise.

"Well, I thought you had more spirit, Jim," she said, with an angry jingle of the glasses on the counter. "I'd have more pride if I were you! I'd show her she couldn't drop me and whistle me back at her pleasure!"

"I don't doubt it, my love. In that respect, as in many others, your sex is vastly superior to ours," Jim answered in his aggravatingly cool voice; and then he took up his hat, and, putting it on, turned to the door. "By the way, Belle, have you any drinkable 'fizz' left? I don't mean the fiery decoction you sell to the boys, but any of that case I brought back with me the last time I went to Maritzburg."

"I believe there are two or three bottles."

"Hand a couple over, then."

Jim tucked the champagne under his arm, and with a careless nod, and a supreme disregard of Miss Belle's angry looks, which exasperated her afresh, went out of the bar, and walked quickly down the street till he reached the Cliftons' shanty. The door stood open, and he paused, and unseen by the pale watcher who sat by her father's bed sponging his burning hands and brow with cool water, and listening to his incoherent mutterings, looked on for a moment in silence, then gently tapped at the door.

Lois started and turned suddenly round; then as she recognised the new-comer, a hot, crimson blush flamed into her pale cheek, and into the blue eyes a curious light of hope and relief and confusion leapt up as she looked eagerly at him.

"Mr. Goddart! Oh, is it really you?" she said; and at the surprise and delight in her voice all the bitterness and hardness died suddenly out of Jim's heart. He put the champagne carefully on the table, and took the timidly offered hand.

"Yea. I only heard half an hour ago that you were in trouble," he said kindly. "I came to see if I could be of any use, or do anything for you."

"Use! Oh, I think you have come just in time to save me from despair," Lois cried in her sweet, impetuous voice, and she looked up at him with tears of relief and gratitude in her eyes. "Not five minutes ago I was hopeless; I told

myself I hadn't a friend in the camp—not a soul to help me—and that they"—and she pointed first to her father, and then to the opposite corner of the shanty, where her lover lay in a heavy stupor which was more like unconsciousness than sleep—"would die, because I could not get a doctor or medicine for them. I thought that no one cared what became of us; and yet at that very moment you were thinking of me—coming to help me! You of all people! Oh, I don't deserve it," and then she took his brown hand in both her own, and looked up at him with such a sweet gratitude and delight in her eyes, that only by a great effort Jim restrained himself, and succeeded in crushing back the fierce desire to take her in his arms and kiss her quivering lips, which suddenly sprang up in his heart and almost overmastered him.

Perhaps Lois read something of it in the eager eyes which looked down at her, for she dropped his hand and coloured vividly. Jim gave an odd laugh.

"Hush! We'll let bygones be bygones," he said hastily. "Only tell me one thing. It was not—your own wish? If you had had your own way, our—friendship might have continued?"

"Yes." She coloured again, and drooped her eyes. "It was not my own wish; I was very sorry," she faltered.

Jim's face grew radiant.

"That is all I wanted to know," he said. "Now tell me—when did the fever begin? How long have they been ill?"

"Father had been ailing for a few days, but we—Fred and I—did not feel alarmed about him until this morning, and then Fred was too ill himself to go for a doctor," Lois answered, "and I did not know what to do."

"You should have sent for me."

"I did not like to do so. I saw that girl from the canteen this morning, and I asked her if there was any one who would go, but——"

"I know; never mind her insolence, Lois," Jim said quickly. "I'll go myself presently, but first you must have a glass of champagne and something to eat. I dare say," and he looked at her enquiringly, "you haven't had much to-day, eh?"

"No, I was too anxious and unhappy to eat," Lois answered, with a faint smile.

She sat down to the table and obediently ate the food he placed before her, and drank the wine he poured out with a

liberal hand; while he stood and leant up against the door, and watched with quiet satisfaction as the colour came back to her pale cheeks, and the strained look died out of her eyes.

"There, you feel fit now," he said kindly; "and now I'll get a horse, and go for the doctor at once. Fortunately it will be moonlight. You understand it will be some time before the doctor can arrive. It is a good four hours' ride to Cronje, and that's the nearest place where I can get one; so you must not be anxious or uneasy if we are longer than you expect. If you'll promise me that, I'll promise the doctor shall be here before daybreak."

"I will do my best," Lois answered.

She followed him outside the shanty, and as, with a nod and smile and a cheery "That's right, keep up your heart," he was turning from her, she put her hand gently on his arm.

"Oh," she said softly, "I am so glad that you came, that you forgave me! How can I thank you?"

Jim started. At the touch of those white fingers every nerve in his body thrilled with sudden ecstasy and delight; his strong hand closed tightly over hers, as he looked down at her. She wore a loose white gown, which was tied round her slim waist, and fell round her in soft, straight folds to the ground; the sunshine streamed upon her yellow head, and flashed a strange radiance into her beautiful face. Jim's eyes flamed with fierce desire and love as he looked down at her. Again the mad longing to take her in his arms, and feel her heart beating against his heart, the touch of her lips against his own, came over him, and this time he did not as before resist it. It was rarely indeed that Jim Goddart balked himself of any desire, or denied himself any gratification which his senses demanded. So his eyes flamed with a fierce light as he looked at her, and his strong fingers closed more tightly than ever over her fluttering hand.

"Shall I tell you how to thank me?" he said, in a low, passionate voice. "You don't think I am going for their sakes, do you? It is for you—because I love you, because I would give my life to serve you! So—give me one kiss—just one little kiss, Lois!"

She started, gave him a quick look; she coloured painfully, then paled again, and Jim felt the hand on which his own was clasped grow suddenly cold and rigid. She did not shrink from him, or make

any remonstrance, or give the indignant denial that he had half expected—she stood before him as perfectly still and motionless as a statue; but when, emboldened by her silence, he bent his head to kiss her, she raised her eyes again and looked at him with such an intense reproach and wonder, that he paused suddenly and drew back from her.

"Since that is the reward you ask, take it," she said, with a cold disdain in her voice that stung Jim keenly; "but remember I give it for their sakes," and she glanced back into the shanty, "only for theirs! Take it if you will, only make haste, and—go," and she raised her fair head and looked straight into his eyes, and held up a pale cold cheek for his kiss.

Jim's colour rose, and his eyes fell under that look. All at once he realised how base and degrading was the thing which he had asked, what a poor and contemptible creature he must seem to her. He dropped her hand suddenly.

"I never took a kiss yet from unwilling lips—I won't begin now," he muttered, and turned away and left her.

Lois stood and looked after him with a strange expression in her blue eyes, with a strange tumult of feeling agitating her gentle heart. Anger was there, and pity, and a strange delight, and all were mingled with a vague self-reproach and shame.

By-and-by she heard the sound of horse's feet, and, moved by a sudden impulse, she went to the door, just as Jim rode past. He did not pause, but took off his hat and bowed low in his saddle.

"Keep up your courage; I promise you the doctor shall be here by daybreak," he said gaily, and Lois smiled and waved her hand; and then, feeling cheered and comforted by that parting assurance, she went back and resumed her lonely vigil.

CHAPTER II.

LATE though it was, lights were still burning in many of the houses when, shortly before midnight, Jim Goddart rode into Cronje.

It had been originally a mere mining camp, just such another as Kuranda was then; but during the last two years a colliery had been opened, and a distillery built, and each had brought with it a considerable influx of population, so that Cronje had suddenly sprung into quite a considerable township, which boasted a

church, two hotels, and innumerable bars and canteens, in addition to dwelling-houses of every size and description.

Jim dismounted at the door of the principal hotel, and giving his horse into the care of the Kaffir groom, ordered two fresh horses to be saddled at once, and asked where the doctor's residence was. He received the gratifying intelligence that he was at that very moment in the hotel, where, so he was further informed, a ball in honour of a wedding which had taken place that morning was being held.

The doctor, who was young and good-looking, and a great favourite with the female portion of the community, had been appointed M.C., and was not particularly well pleased to be disturbed from his pleasant duties by Jim's imperative message. He came into the bar where Jim was leaning against the counter drinking a glass of brandy, and exchanging compliments with the pretty barmaid, and looked sharply at him.

"Well, what is it?" he said impatiently.

Jim took off his hat and bowed courteously, and explained his errand, and assured the doctor that nothing but absolute necessity would have allowed him to deprive the wedding guests of the doctor's society, but that under the circumstances he had no choice but to do so, and ask the doctor to accompany him at once to Kuranda.

"To Kuranda!" The little doctor looked still more annoyed and dismayed. "Why, that's a good four hours' ride from here," he said. "Look here, I'll give you some medicine now, and ride over in the morning. An hour or two can't make much difference. I really can't go now."

Jim looked at him.

"I think you can," he said blandly. "I really think that on second thoughts you will find it advisable to reconsider your determination! You are a stranger here, I believe, but it is possible you may have heard my name mentioned. I am Jim Goddart, at your service."

"Jim Goddart!"

The little doctor was naturally as little of a coward as most of his profession, but he was fresh from peaceful, law-abiding England, and had not altogether lost his inherited prejudices in favour of law and order; and since he came to Cronje he had heard too much of the wild, lawless ways of the diamond diggers, and especially of Jim Goddart, to regard with much complacency the prospect of a midnight

ride alone with him. But still less did he like the idea of refusing to accompany him. The Jim Goddart he had heard so much of would, from all accounts, think as little of putting a bullet through the man who offended or opposed him, as he himself would have thought, in the old days at Guy's, of dissecting the arm or leg of a "subject"; and just then, whether by accident or design he could not tell, Jim's coat happened to fall back, and the doctor saw the barrel of a revolver peeping out of his breast-pocket, and at that, and at the set, determined look in Jim's face, the momentary impulse which had urged him to refuse deserted him.

"Very well," he said, rather sullenly, "since it's an urgent case, I'll go."

"I thought you would," Jim said suavely; "indeed, I have already ordered a horse for you. By the time you are ready," and he glanced at the doctor's dress suit and white tie, and smiled grimly—how many years was it since Jim himself had worn such a suit?—"it will be round."

Dr. Tyrone had many an adventure, and many a strange ride with strange companions in after years, but he will never forget that ride with Jim Goddart across the lonely moonlit veldt. It stands out, and always will stand, clear and distinct from all the other rides of his adventurous life. The slight nervousness and constraint which he at first felt soon wore away. Jim could be a charming companion when he liked, and on this occasion he exerted himself to be entertaining, and succeeded so well that the doctor quite enjoyed his ride.

The night was very hot and oppressive, unusually so indeed, for in Natal, however hot the days may be, the nights are generally cold. The doctor remarked upon this, and wondered what the cause of the unusual heat, and the stifling, oppressive feeling that filled the air, might be. Jim, if he had felt disposed, could have told him that the heat was probably caused by one of the grass fires common enough in that district during the hot weather; but he did not deem it prudent to do so. By-and-by, however, when they had ridden through a great "bush," and emerged from the trees on to the open veldt, the heat became still more oppressive, and the cause of it was soon apparent to the doctor, for far off across the veldt there came rolling along a great cloud of smoke, lighted here and there by darting tongues of flame, and behind the smoke a lurid light, which was

not the light of the coming sunrise, glowed in the eastern sky.

The doctor checked his horse with an exclamation of alarm.

"Look, look!" he cried, and pointed with his whip across the veldt.

Jim nodded imperturbably.

"Yes, bit of a grass fire," he said composedly. "They are common enough in the dry season; Kaffirs, and white men too, for that matter, are such careless beggars. They think nothing of flinging a lighted match or a firebrand among the grass, and then there's a flare-up, as you see. Come on, man, don't stand staring at it," he added impatiently.

But the doctor pulled his horse's head sharply round.

"No—I am going back," he said.

"Afraid, eh?"

Jim smiled superciliously. The doctor coloured hotly.

"Yes, I am afraid," he said. "I don't think I am more of a coward than other men, but I don't care to face that, anyhow. I am going back."

"Nonsense, man; there's no danger! We can reach the ford long before that overtakes us, and the nearer we get to the river the less the danger, for the ground is sandy, and there's less for the flame to feed on. Come along."

"Not I; I am going back," the doctor said resolutely.

"No, you are not."

Jim put his hand on the doctor's bridle and jerked the horse round again. His face had grown very set and grim; under his dark brows his blue eyes looked at his companion full of a cold, relentless determination.

"I promised her that you should be there before daybreak, and you shall, if we have to ride through that hell for it," he said between his clenched teeth.

"I won't, I tell you. Take your hand away!" the doctor cried, and he struck at Jim's hand wildly with his riding-whip.

"And I say you shall;" and then in an instant Jim's hand had gone to his pocket, and the doctor felt the touch of cold steel against his forehead. "Take your choice, man," the inexorable voice said; "ride on, or——" and the steel touched his brow again.

"I'll go; take that away," the doctor said sullenly, and Jim smiled and slid the revolver into his pocket again.

"There's no real danger, man. Fortunately there's no wind. We shall reach

the ford long before that overtakes us," he said composedly; "only don't fool away any more time here."

For some time they rode on quickly and in silence, the doctor casting anxious, perturbed looks towards the cloud of smoke that came rolling across the veldt towards them, but Jim's composed face and perfect calmness slightly reassured him. Perhaps there was no danger, no real danger; and as Jim had said, they would reach the ford before the fire overtook them. No man with the fear of a death so horrible before his eyes, could wear that look of perfect unconcern, the doctor told himself, and the river could not be so very far off now. Just as this comforting thought passed through his mind, his horse swerved suddenly, caught its foot in a hole, and fell, throwing the doctor to the ground. He was not hurt, and was on his feet in an instant; but when with Jim's assistance he proceeded to raise the horse, he found to his alarm and dismay that the poor beast's leg was broken. He looked down at Jim, who was passing his hand gently down the injured limb, with a wild terror in his eyes.

"Curse you, this is your fault!" he cried savagely. "You forced me to ride on—to my death!" and he shuddered and looked wildly at the advancing fire.

"Cheer up, man. If one of us two has to die, it shall not be you, anyhow. Here," he pointed to his own horse, "mount at once."

"What's the use? She won't carry double!" the doctor cried despairingly. "It will only be throwing away two lives instead of one."

"No, she won't carry double, but she'll carry you safe enough," Jim answered coolly. "You know the way, don't you? You said you'd been to the camp before."

"Yes; but you—what will you do!" the doctor cried.

"I? Oh, I can take care of myself. It won't be the first time death and I have had a race together," Jim said carelessly; "and so far I have come off the winner. I dare say I shall now. Don't waste any more time, man!"

"But I have—no right to accept such a sacrifice," the doctor faltered.

Jim frowned and stared at him, and then laughed grimly.

"You," he said, "you? Why, you fool, do you think I care a hang whether you live or die? I promised her," and he set his teeth fiercely, "that you should be at the

camp by daybreak; I'll keep that promise if—I die for it! So go at once. You can tell the boys where you left me. I shall make for the ford—if I don't turn up, tell them to look for me there. Mount, I say," and then, as the doctor hastily swung himself into the saddle, he struck the horse sharply with his riding-whip across the flank, and it reared and plunged, and broke into a wild gallop.

Jim looked after him, threw off coat and waistcoat, and went off at a steady, swinging pace across the veldt. He had only gone a few paces, however, before a sudden thought struck him, and he turned and ran back to where the poor horse lay struggling in pain and terror. "A moment more or less can't make any difference," he said to himself, and then he took out his revolver, and shot the horse through the head.

The doctor heard the report, and turned, struck by a new terror, expecting—he scarcely knew what, and was relieved to see Jim still running steadily behind. He looked again and again, as his horse flew onward, looked with ever-increasing anxiety as the cloud of smoke came nearer and nearer, and the tall figure became first a speck, and then lost in the distance, and far away he saw with a thankful heart the moonlight gleaming on the quiet river.

The dawn was breaking when the doctor rode into camp. He knocked up the inmates of the first shanty he came to and told his story, and quickly and silently horses were saddled, and half-a-dozen men galloped out of camp in search of their comrade. They found him where he had bade them look for him, on the river bank, lying unconscious below an overhanging rock, under which he had dragged himself for shelter, and rough, tender hands raised him and carried him back to camp. The fire had overtaken him just before he reached the bank. It had spared his face, but he was terribly burned about the chest and one arm and leg; and when he awoke to consciousness again he awoke also to an agony of pain. He was conscious by-and-by, in the midst of his torture, of the entrance of a tall, white figure, who knelt on the floor by his side, and put a cool hand on his forehead, and held some cooling drink to his parched lips, and with an effort he forced back a groan, and opened his eyes and smiled at her.

"You see—I kept my promise, Lois," he said.

"Yes, yes; but at what a cost!"

"Never mind the cost. He was in time? Your father and Fred will recover?" he said.

"Yes, thanks to you," Lois cried. "He says that with care and proper treatment they will recover. They are both asleep now," and then she glanced hurriedly round the shanty.

They were alone, for the doctor, feeling that his presence was not required, had stepped outside, and was leaning against the wooden wall smoking his pipe. With a sudden impulse Lois bent over the mattress; her blue eyes, full of a strange, beautiful light, looked straight into and met Jim's in a long, solemn gaze. What did each read there in the other's eyes? What was the unspoken question that leapt up fiercely and passionately in Jim's, the unspoken answer which Lois's gave back in return? No word was spoken; yet in that supreme moment of each life heart spoke to heart, and each understood without the aid of words the other's thoughts.

For one long moment they looked at each other, and then the blushes which had dyed Lois's cheeks faded away, and a quiet, beautiful smile came into her face. She bent her head lower, lower still, till Jim felt her light breath on his cheek, a loosened tress of her hair touch his brow.

"Jim," she said, in a low voice full of inexpressible tenderness and love, "you would not take the kiss you asked for yesterday, because I—was unwilling. See, I give it to you now, dear, willingly, with all my heart," and she bent her head still lower, and their lips clung together in a long, silent kiss.

"Doctor, tell me the truth," Jim said late that evening, when Lois, who had gone to and fro from one shanty to the other all the day, had said good-night and left him to the doctor's care; "will my arm and leg ever be any use to me again? Shall I be a cripple all my life? Come, man," as the doctor hesitated; "speak out. I'm not a child or a woman. I want to know the truth."

"It is impossible to tell at present," the doctor answered evasively, and Jim gave an odd smile.

"Ah, I understand," he said.

He did not speak again for some time, and the doctor, fancying he was asleep, and being worn out with his long ride and want of rest, lay down on the mattress in the opposite corner of the shanty. By-

and-by, however, hearing Jim groaning and tossing restlessly to and fro, he rose again, and asked if the pain was worse.

"Ay, almost unendurable. Can't you give me something to put me out of this torture?" Jim said impatiently. "Haven't you any morphia, or chloral, or anything that will give me a few hours' sleep? I shall go mad before morning if this goes on."

The doctor hesitated.

"I could give you a sleeping draught, but I am afraid to do it," he said. "Your nervous system has had a severe shock, and your heart isn't over-strong to start with. It might be dangerous in its present state to give you anything of the kind."

"Well, mix me a draught, anyhow; I won't take it if I can help it," Jim said impatiently; and the doctor, who was half-asleep, did so, and placed it on the box that stood by the bed and served as a table.

"Don't take it if you can possibly help it, Goddart," he said, and Jim promised.

The knowledge that oblivion and sleep were within his reach brought a temporary lessening of the agonising pain, and Jim lay and endured it in silence, and envied the doctor lying on the mattress at the opposite side of the shanty wrapt in the deep sleep of exhaustion. But as the pain lessened his brain cleared, and his mental faculties, which until now had been deadened by suffering, regained their usual strength. Jim thought of many things as he lay awake through the long, slowly-passing hours, and longed for the day to break; thought of the past and the future, of his wild, reckless life, of lost opportunities, of sins forgotten until now; and the black record of those wasted years rose up before him, full of a terrible reproach and condemnation. Then from the past, his thoughts turned to the future, to the question he had asked the doctor, to the evasive answer he had received. Jim understood what lay behind that answer as well as the doctor himself! A cripple! Jim Goddart, who had gloried in his strength, who had never known a day's illness in all his thirty years of life, a cripple! Lame and helpless, an object of pity to a few, of contemptuous scorn to others! A cripple for life! Better, oh, far better, to have died out on the veldt; and yet, if so, and if he had died there, he would never have seen that look in Lois's eyes, never felt the pressure of her sweet lips on his own. Ah, that kiss, that

supreme moment of bliss, was worth living for—nay, more, was worth dying for, he told himself! But what of the future? They had been friends, but they could never be mere friends again. What were those lines of Swinburne's he had once read and—a wonder for Jim, who did not care for poetry—remembered:

Take hands and part with laughter,
Touch lips and part with tears.

Ah, friendship between Lois and Jim was impossible now. They had touched lips, they had read each other's hearts, and life could never be quite the same to them again.

He was to be a cripple—a helpless cripple for the rest of his life! The thought was torture to him. He could have shrieked aloud in impotent rage and pain as he tossed restlessly on his mattress, and his wounds burned and throbbed afresh. Would the morning never come? Would that sleeping log in the opposite corner never wake? Then his eyes fell on the rude table by his side, and he saw the draught which the doctor had placed there before he slept.

"Don't take it unless you are absolutely compelled; it may be dangerous," he had said. Jim remembered the words as he stretched out his uninjured arm and took up the glass from the table. He looked at it with an odd smile. There was oblivion there for the present, anyhow; perhaps—who knew?—for ever!

"I guess I'll risk it," Jim said slowly, and then he raised the glass to his lips and drank.

"Died in his sleep; sudden failure of the heart's action, not to be surprised at under the circumstances."

So the doctor told the first anxious enquirer who came as soon as the dawn broke, pale and weary with her long vigil, to ask for news of the sufferer; and then he added kindly, as he saw the deadly pallor that came into the girl's face, and the wild despair that flashed into her sweet eyes at the words: "Better so. If he had lived he would have suffered terribly, and would probably have been a cripple for the rest of his life."

Lois looked at him with wild, dilated eyes. She did not speak, but she motioned him to stand aside and allow her to pass alone into the shanty. Noiselessly she crossed the floor, and stood by the bed, and turned back the handkerchief with which the doctor had covered the dead

man's face. Calm, beautiful, and impassive, it lay back on the pillow, with closed eyelids resting on the pale cheeks, with the faint shadow of a smile lingering on the lips—the lips on which her kiss still rested! There was the look on his face which Nature meant it to wear, on which his mother's eyes had rested with tender pride long years ago—the look of his lost youth and innocence. For a long time Lois stood and looked at him in silence; then she bent her head lower and lower, till her cheek touched his cheek, till her warm, trembling lips rested on the irresponsive lips in a long, farewell kiss.

"I am glad you knew!" she whispered;
"oh, I am glad you knew!"

Then she replaced the handkerchief, and drawing her shawl closely over her face, went out with swift, noiseless steps into the cold, grey dawn.

A MIDSUMMER BIRTHDAY.

By HARRIETT STOCKALL.

'Tis midmost June—the roses flush
The red old walls with bloom,
Deep damask, moss, and maiden-blush,
Sweet, quaint old names we learned to know
When first we watched the roses blow;
Old-fashioned flowers that cluster still,
Year after year afresh, and fill
The garden with perfume.

But fairer than the fairest rose
That glads the garden ways,
Is our sweet flower, to whom the close
Of childhood comes to-day, who looks,
With clear, soft eyes, like summer brooks,
(And half in smiles and half in tears,)
Back o'er her one-and-twenty years,
The morning of her days.

Sweet Rose! love-named in happy hour,
Fair Rose! that grew so tall.
The darling of home's guarded bower;
An added blessing to the store
Of bliss once ours—but ours no more—
An added lustre to the light
That lit our hearthstone day and night,
And sparkled over all.

A comfort past all power to tell
When grief became our lot,
When waves of sorrow rose and fell.
Ah! let our dead, asleep so sound
Within the churchyard's holy ground,
By all sweet, sacred memories speak
Of what thou wert, and art—too weak
All words of ours, God wot!

Yet fain would we find words to-day,
Belovèd, for thy sake.
Fond words and sweet love longs to say,
But, thinking of a voice now dumb,
The tender accents will not come;
And through all joyful hopes that we
Feel beating in our hearts for thee,
The sad, old wound will ache.

He should have blest thee, dear, who blessed
Our baby flower of flowers;
A father's kisses should be pressed
On thy fair brow this day of days,
A father's tender words of praise
Should be the first to greet thine ear
In womanhood's new opening year,
Not feeble tones like ours.

He would have blessed thee, dear, as we
Can never hope to bless;
God made brave hearts like his to be
Sure homes of shelter, firm and strong,
To guard their loved from scathe and wrong.
With aid beyond our utmost power,
He would have helped thee in the hour
Of peril and distress.

But, dear, what know we? It may be
Across that ocean dim,
He, seeing all we cannot see,
He, knowing all we cannot know,
May watch in love our ways below.
Ah! take our kisses, take our tears,
And take through our remaining years
The love we owe to him!

JOYCE MELHUISH'S MISDOINGS.

By LUCIE WALKER.

*Author of "Of Doubtful Character," "The End of his Wor,"
"For Angele's Sake," "With the Smugglers," etc.*

JOYCE MELHUISH was not a well-brought-up girl. To speak accurately, she had had no bringing up at all. The sweet, wilful, motherless baby had grown up into the equally sweet and wilful young woman simply and solely by the light of nature, and without any of those salutary restraints and disciplines which are considered indispensable to the training of the weaker and fairer sex.

There had, in fact, been no one to undertake this training—no one to correct her defects and develop her qualities; that is to say, no one except her father, and what was Colonel Stuart Melhuish likely to do for a pretty daughter beyond spoiling her when he was disposed to make a plaything of her, and neglecting her utterly when other less innocent pastimes engrossed him? So it goes without saying, that poor Joyce was full of faults—faults of which, so far from being ashamed, she was not even aware, until she came to live with her maternal grandfather, Dr. Hepburn, in the quiet old Lowlandshire town of Fenborough.

Fenborough is apt to look suspiciously at anything which oversteps the narrow boundary of its every-day experience. Joyce Melhuish was decidedly an innovation, besides which she embodied an unpleasant complication of circumstances; and Fenborough felt justified in expressing surprise that the Hepburns should so far

forget what was due to themselves, to the family at Fenborough Towers, and to society in general, as to offer a home to the orphan child of their disowned daughter.

Perhaps no one felt more surprise in the matter than the good old doctor himself, nor was any one more fully alive to the delicacy of the position in which he was placing himself with Lady Fenborough; but his part in the prelude to Joyce's coming had not been quite spontaneous—it had been thrust upon him rather against his own judgement by his junior partner, Gabriel Lang.

"Lang is such a fellow," the old man was wont to say, "he gets hold of such queer notions, and though he doesn't exactly persuade you, still, you find yourself doing what he wants you to. And yet I always ask his advice."

Dr. Lang's advice on this particular point had been asked one morning when the partners met in Dr. Hepburn's sanctum for their usual discussion of the day's programme.

On this occasion, after keeping his junior waiting for a quarter of an hour, the elder man appeared with an open letter in his hand, and a look of worry on his face.

"Lang," he said as he shut the door carefully, "what do you think? I've had a letter from my grand-daughter, Joyce Melhuish."

Dr. Lang looked at the letter; he saw it was written on paper deeply edged with black.

"And there is bad news in it?" he said interrogatively.

"Bad news! I should think so! Why, she writes to say that her father is dead."

"Dead?" cried Lang. "Dead! Stuart Melhuish dead?"

"Yes," replied the other irritably. "I don't know why he shouldn't die. He was an old man, and he'd lived a rummy life. He died on Monday at some place on the Riviera, where no doubt there is a gambling hell."

"And what is to become of the child?" asked Lang.

"She isn't a child," retorted the old man, still more irritably, "she's nineteen. Well, she's absolutely penniless. What he has left will barely pay his debts. Here, you can read her letter and see for yourself."

Dr. Lang took the letter, and read it slowly several times, while Dr. Hepburn watched him anxiously.

"Bad case, isn't it?" he said at last.

"It is," said Lang; "and I suppose you will offer her a home?"

"A home, my good fellow! I offer a home to Stuart Melhuish's child—here—at Fenborough?"

"My dear Hepburn," replied the other quietly, "you must remember, she is Sybil's child, too."

"I do remember it; but that makes it none the easier. Think of her ladyship's feelings."

"I don't see," said Lang gravely, "that her ladyship's feelings can count here. Of course, she is the great personage of Fenborough, and we all like to show her proper respect. But Joyce Melhuish is destitute; she turns to you as her natural protector."

"But, Lang," the old man began again, "remember the scandal there was, and the time it took to blow over; and now when people have forgotten it——"

"I see," interrupted Lang, "you haven't got over the old grudge. You can't bring yourself to say: 'I will forgive all that I can't forget.' Of course, it isn't the first time that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and that the children's teeth have been set on edge thereby. If Sybil did wrong, she paid for it, and really the wrong was in part excusable; she was blinded by the romance. The romance was soon over, and now all that remains of it is one more weak woman to fight her way, friendless, in a hard-hearted world."

Dr. Hepburn's face had softened a little.

"You're trying to probe my weak spot, Lang," he said. "Well, I'll think it over. But, remember, I'm like a city set on a hill, and I shall have to take the consequences."

"There will be no consequences of which you need be ashamed," said the younger man confidently; then he opened the deferred consultation on the day's business.

Dr. Hepburn was perfectly right when he said that he was as a city set on a hill, and that his doings would be freely commented on by his neighbours. He lived—as befitted his social weight—in one of the square, brown stone houses which stand on either side of the road leading from the lower part of the town to the gates of Fenborough Park, the seat of the Earl of Fenborough. All the Fenburians who were anybody lived in this quarter, and

were invited, on rare and solemn occasions, to partake of the hospitality of Fenborough Towers. They were nearly all old residents, who knew one another's family history and private circumstances with an accuracy which demonstrated clearly how little business of their own they had to occupy their minds; and when the news spread abroad that Joyce Melhuish was coming to take up her abode in her grandfather's house, the half-forgotten scandal to which he had alluded was raked up and discussed with fresh zest, and with the compound interest due to it after twenty years of comparative oblivion.

"I've no patience with Dr. Hepburn," said the elder Miss Stow—who was his opposite neighbour in Park Road. "I told him he ought to have let the girl take a situation, and he says she isn't trained for any post which a lady can take. But surely with the knowledge of foreign languages she must have, and her experience of travelling—seeing she has spent her life dragging all over the Continent—some one would have taken her as a travelling companion."

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Stow, junior. "Well, if he won't hear reason, I shouldn't wonder if he doesn't lose the practice at Fenborough Towers through his obstinacy."

"Really," cried Mrs. Wyeth, "you don't mean that her ladyship has said anything to him?"

"Not that I've heard," was the answer, "but I shouldn't wonder if she did."

"But why should the Countess interfere?" asked Mrs. Lee, the new curate's wife. "What does this Joyce Melhuish matter to her?"

"My dear Mrs. Lee," cried the good ladies in chorus, "don't you know Joyce Melhuish's father was his lordship's own cousin? That makes the girl a near kinswoman to the whole family—to Viscount Marshlands and the Honourable Anthony, and to Lady Janet and Lady Clara."

"Good gracious!" cried Mrs. Lee, duly impressed; "and how came Dr. Hepburn's daughter to marry the Earl's cousin?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said the elder Miss Stow, "though it seems strange you've never heard, for there was an awful fuss over the affair. Joyce Melhuish's mother, Sybil Hepburn, was considered the beauty of the place. People used to say that her father and brothers wanted her to marry Gabriel Lang, who had just passed splendid examinations and bought a partnership with Dr. Hepburn—I believe myself he

was very much in love with her—but she wouldn't hear of him, for her head was turned with all the flattery she got. Then this Colonel Stuart Melhuish came to stay at the Towers. He was a middle-aged man, wonderfully handsome, but with the look about him of having been a dreadful rake, which, indeed, he had been. However, he was supposed to have turned over a new leaf, for he was lately engaged to marry her ladyship's sister—who was no beauty, but had a fine fortune. I don't think it ever came out how Sybil Hepburn and he scraped acquaintance, nor where they met; but anyhow, in a fortnight's time they ran away together—she from her father's house and he from the Towers. Dr. Hepburn followed them to Paris and saw them married properly; and then he washed his hands of her. Colonel Melhuish had to sell out and disappear. I've heard he treated his wife very badly—but that's just what you might expect. It was a great disgrace to the whole town. And then fancy that foolish old man bringing the girl to live in his house—right under her ladyship's very nose!"

The spring sun was shining cheerily down into the placid streets of Fenborough. The fresh, bright green of the elms and limes in Lord Fenborough's park made a tender, youthful setting to the time-worn, grave houses in Park Road, and the lilacs and laburnums lifted clusters of gay blossom above the dull garden walls.

Mrs. Hepburn stood at the dining-room window, looking into the street and waiting; she was too excited to sit down. She was thinking of Joyce's mother. She had not ventured to go to the station to meet the grand-daughter whom she must welcome with such mixed feelings. She had, however, insisted that the doctor should go; moreover, she had hurried him off far too early for the train, and he had had twenty insufferable minutes to spend on the platform, whither, by some curious coincidence, the Misses Stow and Mrs. Wyeth had bent their steps that afternoon. They stood at the bookstall, engaged in an apparently interminable argument over library books. They were obviously waiting for the London train, too.

"Inquisitive old cats!" was the doctor's inward comment. He always maintained afterwards that Joyce's reputation would have had a better chance in Fenborough if those good ladies had not been eye-witnesses of her arrival.

It was easy to single her out at once among the half-dozen or so of passengers who alighted; a tall, shapely girl, dressed in deep mourning. First she looked up and down the platform with an air of self-possession, then she turned quickly to the door of the compartment from which she had alighted.

"My umbrellas, Marshlands," she cried in a clear voice; "they are up in the rack." Then there appeared a young man, laden with a rug-case, a fur cloak, a travelling-bag, and a roll of umbrellas.

He was a small, rather plain young man, with light hair, and a pink complexion, and he looked rather awkward as he emerged with his load.

The Misses Stow and Mrs. Wyeth exchanged scandalised glances. A porter hurried up, touched his hat humbly, and relieved him of the packages.

"I suppose there will be some one to meet me?" went on Miss Melhuish. "Just see, will you, Marshlands?"

"Thank you, my lord," said Dr. Hepburn, hurrying up and taking Joyce's travelling-bag from the young man.

"How do, Hepburn?" said the heir to the Fenborough title, in a voice almost as condescending as that in which Joyce had been ordering him about: "You see, I've had the pleasure of escorting Miss Melhuish. Ta-ta, Joyce, I leave you in proper hands."

"Au revoir," is Joyce's answer. "Come and see me soon."

"My dear," cried one Miss Stow to the other as they walked home, "what do you think of that?" and neither of them found words to say.

"My dear," said Dr. Hepburn, as soon as he had disposed of the necessary enquiries after Joyce's journey, "I had no idea you knew any of the Fenborough family."

Joyce didn't reply at once; she leant back in the brougham and began to laugh.

"I can't help it," she said; "you called him 'my lord' so respectfully; and he looked so important; and it seemed to me so absurd."

"My dear," said Dr. Hepburn reprovingly, "there is nothing absurd about it. Every one here treats the Viscount with respect. He will be Earl of Fenborough some day."

But Joyce did not stand reprovèd; her eyes shone with the laugh she repressed.

"Yes," she said, "that alone is enough

to make a prig of him. He is a prig, isn't he?"

"No, my dear; certainly not."

"Ah," she replied, "you don't know him as well as I do."

Dr. Hepburn stared in astonishment.

"How is it you know the Viscount so well?"

"Because I've had exceptional opportunities for studying him. We ran up against him at Homburg three years ago, and since then we have run up against him everywhere. He seemed delighted every time, and I wasn't altogether sorry—I got such a lot of fun out of him."

"My dear," said the doctor, in a tone that was meant to be really serious, "you will have to give up getting in out of Lord Marshlands here."

"Why?" asked Joyce, turning a pair of liquid brown eyes on the old man.

"Because—because," he began hesitatingly, "now that you have come to Fenborough your lot is cast with your mother's people, and his lordship does not belong to our circle—though he is your cousin."

For all answer Joyce laughed again. Then the carriage drew up at Dr. Hepburn's door, and Mrs. Hepburn came out to welcome her grand-daughter.

Before bedtime that night every one in Fenborough knew that Joyce Melhuish had travelled all the way from Paris with Lord Marshlands, and had ordered him about at Fenborough station as though she were quite used to having an earl's heir apparent to fetch and carry for her, which showed great depravity on her part. Still, that was more easy to condone than the misdoing which was laid at her door before the lilac and laburnum flowers had sobered down into clusters of seed-pods.

Dr. Lang's appearances in the small social world of Fenborough were few and far between, his plea being that he was the working partner of the firm of Hepburn and Lang, and that his time and energy were completely absorbed by the lion's share of their large and important practice. But to Fenborough society Dr. Lang was something above and beyond an unquestionably capable medicine man, and among the few marriageable men of the quiet, jog-trot town, not one could show such credentials as his in good looks, good means, and good manners. So, despite his distaste for tea-parties, musical evenings, little dinners and dances, invitations were showered regularly upon him, and the good reasons he gave for refusing them

were accepted without ill-will, because he had always treated every one alike, and because no scheming matron or susceptible maiden could insinuate that she had been distinguished by his special attention.

But with Joyce Melhuish's advent this was altered, and Fenborough exchanged significant glances with itself when it was reported that Dr. Lang had been playing tennis nearly every evening for a whole fortnight on Dr. Hepburn's lawn, with Dr. Hepburn's grand-daughter.

It might be, some one suggested charitably, that the public health was unusually good, and that the busy doctor had more leisure. On this presumption Mrs. Wyeth invited him to tea—without result, and his conduct was freely discussed in his absence.

"Otherwise engaged," said Miss Stow, with a sniff. "Of course he is; we've just seen him go into Dr. Hepburn's."

"Ah, well," rejoined the hostess, with asperity, "if he's gone there, he's gone with his eyes open. I took my opportunity yesterday, when I met him in the street, and told him what every one but himself knows."

"You mean about——," and Miss Stow supplied the hiatus with a significant wave of her hand in the direction of Fenborough Park gates; "and what did he say?"

"He said he made it a point not to believe gossip."

"Gossip, indeed!" cried Miss Stow. "Gossip! Why, our housemaid saw them with her own eyes yesterday evening. The Viscount was riding and she afoot in Lady Anne's Walk, and she was saying: 'Marshlands, you're a noodle; you'll be late for dinner.'"

"She's a terrible old woman, isn't she? Now, come, Dr. Lang, I know I often talk nonsense, but you'll allow I'm uttering words of wisdom when I say that Lady Fenborough is a terrible old woman."

"She isn't old," said Dr. Lang, smiling; "she's barely forty-six. Shall you call yourself old at that age?"

"You're begging the question," replies Joyce severely; "it doesn't matter what people call themselves—they are what other people call them. Besides, I'm really angry with Lady Fenborough. It appears that she has the impertinence to resent my existence—that she has hinted to my grandfather that I must be careful not to come between the wind and her nobility."

Dr. Lang made no reply; he had come

to Dr. Hepburn's that afternoon with the quixotic intention of warning Joyce that the tongue of gossip was busy with what was no doubt an accidental meeting between herself and her cousin. He had adroitly led the conversation towards the subject, and the result of his diplomacy was this philippic.

"She may be a countess," continued Joyce vehemently, "that doesn't prevent her being a snob. I saw her take my measure the first Sunday in church. Oh, how she surveyed me from the lofty height of the Fenborough pew! If she were as clever as you all think her, she would act differently towards me. Do you know she has forbidden Marshlands to keep up the friendship we made abroad?"

"Is Lord Marshlands such a very dear friend, then?" he asked, which was not at all what he had meant to say.

"Good gracious, no!" was the answer; "but why should she keep him away? Put yourself in my place. What would you say if you were I?"

"I would say nothing," replied Lang warily. "I would be as prudent as possible."

"Of course you would," cried Joyce; "it seems to me that Fenborough folks would breathe prudently if her ladyship wished it. But I thought you were a little more independent."

"One is all the more independent for being a little prudent," he rejoined significantly.

"Ah! I know what you are driving at," she said, laughing; "some of those old pussies have seen me talking to Marshlands in the park. If I had been prudent they wouldn't have seen me. And you," she continued, raising her brown eyes frankly to his, "are you thinking all sorts of horrid things of me? Are you going to order me never to speak to Marshlands again?"

He felt a strange thrill run through him from her liquid eyes. "I shouldn't presume to give you orders of any sort," he said; "but I should like to give you a little advice. I am much older than you, you know, and I take a great interest in you for the sake of old times, and for——" He paused, stumbling over words that seemed to come unbidden.

"You are very kind," she said, and he thought he caught a sound of mockery in her voice; "well, I shall value your advice, so pray let me have it."

For answer he held out his hands, and taking both hers, stood for a moment wondering what had happened to him.

"Joyce," came Mrs. Hepburn's voice from the window, "here is tea. Dr. Lang, will you come and have a cup?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Hepburn," was the startled answer. "I fear I mustn't; I've got such a heap of work waiting at home."

"Joyce," said Mrs. Hepburn severely, when they were alone, "what have you been saying to Dr. Lang? He looks so serious."

"He always looks serious," said Joyce. "Moreover, he had been doing all the saying."

Whatever work Dr. Lang had hurried home to do that evening he neglected shamefully. When he went to bed at midnight the result of his labour was contained in a short letter to a London friend who wanted a change of air. The next morning he told Dr. Hepburn that he was going to exchange practices for a month with a doctor at Stepney. "It's Mowbray," he concluded; "you remember Mowbray?"

Yes, Dr. Hepburn remembered him—it was all right. He made no objection, so Gabriel Lang beat a retreat with flying colours.

The East End of London is not a charming place to work in in the summer, especially when a man is too busy to go westward for a breath of fresh air. Dr. Lang, however, was glad to be busy. He had come away from Fenborough determined to work so hard, that he should quite forget how nearly he had allowed himself to drift along the current of what he had taken to be old memories into a flood of new passion. But among the many strange things he came across in Stepney he found no river of Lethe, and the further he removed himself from Joyce's neighbourhood the more vividly her presence was with him. In fact, it is quite possible that Gabriel Lang would never have known how deeply he was in love if he had remained face to face with the danger of losing his heart. During the first week he thought no more of Joyce than he could help. During the second he found that the rustle of her soft dress came to him on the stifling London breeze, the echo of her voice in the clatter of the London streets, the light of her eyes in the glimmer of the hazy London stars. During the last fortnight he counted the days, then the hours, until he should

be back at Fenborough. For a new resolve had ousted his old one. "I will have it out with her," he said to himself. "She can but say no. Anything is better than this state of indecision."

He reached Fenborough by the afternoon train, and an hour later he had walked up Park Road and was enquiring at Dr. Hepburn's door first for the doctor, then for Mrs. Hepburn, lastly for Miss Melhuish.

"The doctor and Mrs. Hepburn are out driving," was the answer, "and Miss Joyce—she's gone for a walk in the park."

Then Miss Stow, from her old post of vantage, saw Dr. Lang take the little passage beside Dr. Hepburn's garden wall which led into Fenborough Park. He would not look for Joyce, he told himself, as he sat down on a bench among the trees, but if she came home that way he would take it as an omen. The air was heavy with the scent of the limes and busy with the hum of countless insects. The sinking sunlight danced in quiet arabesques on the grass. He drew in a long breath—all the old things seemed so new—and there was an oppression at his heart which was neither joy nor pain. What could he say to her? No words would formulate themselves in his mind. He could scarcely think. Presently among the trees he heard a murmur of voices coming nearer—a murmur too low to be distinguishable. He got up restlessly. He had not thought that others might be coming by before Joyce came. Then he stood suddenly still. He had come in sight of the speakers, but they had not seen him. They stood hand-in-hand taking a lover-like leave of one another, and the shifting light fell on the face which had been his dream all these foolish nights and days, and then he saw Lord Marchlands draw Joyce Melhuish—who made but a faint resistance—to his breast and kiss her, not once nor twice, on her forehead, her cheeks, her lips. Suddenly she lifted her head, and seeing that they were not alone shook herself free, and flew, rather than ran, past him, while Lord Marchlands walked slowly towards the invaders of his paradise.

"Congratulate me, Lang," he said, holding out his hand with rather a forced laugh. "We've just settled it all, and now I've only got to talk to the governor and the mater."

"Rather a big 'only,' isn't it?" said Lang grimly.

"Oh, there'll be a bit of a tussle, no doubt," said his lordship, "but I shall hold my own. She's worth it, you know."

The next morning, before ten o'clock, Park Road was astonished by seeing the Fenborough carriage stop at Dr. Hepburn's, and the doctor himself was more than a little flurried when his study door opened and Lady Fenborough, her cheeks unusually pale and her lips contracted, entered the room.

"I have come for a few minutes' private conversation, Hepburn," she said in a hard, dry voice, without any preliminary greeting.

"I knew I should find you in at this hour."

"I trust your ladyship is not feeling indisposed?" said the doctor nervously, trying to repress a vague misgiving.

"I am feeling far more than indisposed," replied the great lady. "I am feeling seriously annoyed—seriously angry."

"I am sorry to hear it, but if I can be of any use I shall be most delighted."

"I don't think you will be delighted," went on her ladyship, with increased acerbity. "I am come to insist that you send Miss Melhuish away from here this very day."

"Send Joyce away at a moment's notice? But why, Lady Fenborough? Nay, it would be——"

"But you must," interrupted her ladyship, "unless I am to understand that you are conniving at this disgraceful affair, and that you aid and abet her in this entrapping of Lord Marshlands."

"Disgraceful affair—Lord Marshlands—connivance!" repeated the old man, bewildered. "I fail to see what your ladyship means."

"My good Hepburn, there is none so blind as the man who will not see. You surely know what I find is the common gossip of the place—that this girl has been meeting Marshlands day after day, and that she has entrapped him into what he is foolish enough to consider an engagement. Silly boy! As to her, it is plain she is an adventuress."

"But is it not possible," pleaded the old man feebly, "that your ladyship has been misinformed?"

"Misinformed!" rejoined Lady Fenborough sharply. "I tell you I have it all from Marshlands himself—he says he will marry her."

Then, as Dr. Hepburn himself afterwards expressed it, you might have knocked him down with a feather. It seemed impossible that this story should be true.

"Would you like to see her?" he asked, speaking at random in his first dismay.

"To see her! No, thank you! I wish none of us ever had seen her. The object of my visit is to make perfectly clear to you that the girl must go from here. Must, you understand—there is no alternative."

Dr. Hepburn fancied to this day he was about to take up the challenge thus imperiously thrown down; that he was about to refuse to banish from her only home the child he had learnt to love. But before he had found words forcible enough to express his open revolt against the irate sovereign lady of Fenborough, the study door opened, and Joyce—her pale face a little flushed and her eyes bright with excitement—stood before them.

"I beg your pardon for intruding," she said in her clear, steady voice, "but they told me that Lady Fenborough was here. I can guess the object of her visit, and I am come to speak a very important word in the matter under discussion." She spoke with a graceful self-possession which the great lady even in her anger could not help admiring. "Lord Marshlands has no doubt told you," she went on, turning to Lady Fenborough, "what I had not mentioned to Dr. Hepburn—that he has done me the honour of asking me to be his wife. Of course, I can understand that you are very angry about his offer, and still more angry that I accepted him. You have come here to say that the marriage is impossible. You are quite right—it is impossible, but," and Joyce smiled bitterly, "not because you say so, not because of any barrier you would put between us. The fact is, I thought the matter seriously over last night, probably while Marshlands was talking of it to you, and the result of my thinking was that I sat down and wrote a letter to him, which he must have had before you left home this morning. In my letter I told him that, even at the risk of giving him great pain, I must take back my hasty promise. You understand, there is no engagement between me and my cousin—positively none. I would not marry him if you wished me to."

Lady Fenborough had listened in mute astonishment to Joyce's impetuous speech, her cold, grey eyes fixed on the girl's animated face, and a feeling of intense relief in her heart. Marshlands would, she reflected, make an outrageous scene, but he was not a strong-minded personage, he would yield to the force of circumstances after the first moment of fierce rebellion.

She heard the girl to the end, then she rose with a contemptuous gesture.

"Your behaviour," she said, "is most incomprehensibly disgraceful. No nice-minded young woman would do what you have done."

"I dare say not," replied Joyce wearily; "but then I don't pretend to be a nice-minded young woman."

In the course of the day a messenger from Fenborough Towers brought a letter to Dr. Hepburn's for Miss Melhuish—a letter which had cost poor Lord Marshlands a long and bitter hour to indite; a letter in which he pleaded and threatened, and despaired and hoped, through three sheets of closely-written paper; a letter which he felt sure would move the heart of the only woman in the world who ever was so tenderly loved. But the appeal had no effect, because Joyce never broke the big seal with the Fenborough arms which gave the missive such an aristocratic air.

When it was brought to her in her room, where she sat, feeling more unhappy than she had ever imagined she could have felt, she gave it back with orders that some one should run after the messenger and bid him return it into Lord Marshlands' own hands.

Late that afternoon another messenger from the great house came riding wildly into Fenborough. He galloped past Dr. Hepburn's, down over the bridge, and into the less aristocratic part of the town, where the exigencies of the practice compelled the junior partner to live. Shortly after, the news had spread far and wide that Lord Marshlands had had a terrible accident while cleaning his pistol, that he lay in danger of his life, and that an eminent London surgeon had been telegraphed for on Dr. Lang's recommendation.

Poor Joyce was in deep disgrace. It was an open secret in Fenborough that her ladyship had interfered with a high hand in Lord Marshlands' love-making, and that the story of the accident with the pistol was merely a polite fiction to screen a far more serious truth. Luckily, under the combined skill of Dr. Lang and the London surgeon the first imminent danger was soon over, but it still remained to be seen whether the patient had strength to combat with the terrible fever which had set in when the ball had been extracted from that part of his anatomy in which his unskilful hand had lodged it. Her ladyship, as she kept watch beside her delirious son and heir, heard a great deal

that was very grievous to her. Night and day one name, coupled with every term of endearment, rose to his lips—Joyce, sweet Joyce, incomparable Joyce. No mother, however hard-hearted, should part him from his Joyce. Would not Joyce revoke the words of that awful letter, or should he have to shoot himself because he could not live without her? Lady Fenborough clenched her teeth and bore it until she could bear it no longer. "Give him something to calm him," she said imperiously to Dr. Lang.

"I am giving him all I can," was Dr. Lang's reply.

"Joyce, Joyce!" came the agonised voice from the bed. "My mother has sent her away."

"Let her come to him," cried her ladyship. "I had rather she had him than that he died. Go to her and explain, and say I have forgiven her."

There was no reason why Gabriel Lang should have accepted such a commission. Joyce's summons to her lover's side need not have come through him, but he took a grim pleasure in being the bearer of the olive-branch which cut him off from the last semblance of hope.

He had not seen Joyce since that memorable evening in the park, when she had hurried past him with that other man's kisses still burning on her face. He almost exclaimed when she came to him now, so pale and worn she looked.

"I hope," he began bravely, "that the message I bring you will cheer you a little. Lady Fenborough wants you to go and help her to nurse Lord Marshlands, who lies in a most critical state. She wished me to say she forgave everything."

The tears rose into Joyce's eyes. "I am very sorry for poor Marshlands," she said, "but I shall not go to him."

"You will not go!" exclaimed Dr. Lang. "Surely it is your duty to go to him in his hour of need!"

"You must give him a strong opiate," said Joyce, unmoved; "that will be far better for him than to see me again."

"My dear Miss Melhuish," he began again, "you do not understand. Lady Fenborough is ready to consent to your engagement. You will be received on a proper footing."

Joyce smiled bitterly. "Her ladyship is very condescending," she said, "but I will not go. There is no engagement to recognise; I cannot hold myself bound by a promise which Marsh-

lands forced out of me, and which I regretted the moment I had given."

"Is that what I am to say to Lady Fenborough?" he asked, steadying his voice with difficulty. "It is a cruel answer."

"It is all I can send," she said simply. "Why should I pretend to love Lord Marshlands when I—when I don't?"

"Miss Melhuish," said Dr. Lang gravely, "you must see that——"

But to his astonishment Joyce lifted a pair of blazing eyes to his face.

"There, there," she cried, "perhaps I see more than you fancy, and I don't want to know how bad you think me. But you can tell Lady Fenborough that this horrid affair is all her own fault. If she had behaved properly to me I shouldn't have tried to defy her. If she had not bullied Marshlands he wouldn't have wanted to make love to me. He never made love to me abroad; he used to fall in love with other girls. He's as shallow as a street gutter. I'm not behaving a bit worse than all the rest of them."

"Very well," he said, rising and speaking rather stiffly. "I will do my best to explain to Lady Fenborough. Good morning."

She let him cross the room, her eyes still fixed on him; he had turned the latch and opened the door when he heard her say faintly:

"Dr. Lang."

He turned.

"It was your fault partly, too," she said, with a desperate effort. "Don't you remember how you began to talk to me for my good in the garden that afternoon? Why did you stop in the middle?"

"I stopped because," he replied grimly, "because I was going to say something very foolish."

"How do you know I should have thought it foolish?" she asked. "On the contrary, I believe if you had said that say out you would have saved all this trouble and worry to Lady Fenborough, and Marshlands, and me."

Whereupon Gabriel Lang shut the half-opened door, and sweeping back all his doubts and hesitations, recrossed the room, and the long-suspended sentence was finished very elaborately.

"And you can make Marshlands well again," said Joyce after a while, when Dr. Lang had found that time did not stand still even on the happiest day. "He's an awfully silly boy, you know, but he really has a sensible constitution."

"Yes, darling," said Dr. Lang confidently. "I and his sensible constitution will pull him through, and as soon as he is well, he shall go off on a little cruise round the world to see if he can't find another Joyce at the Antipodes."

"He'll find Joyces everywhere," replied Lord Marshlands' pearl among women.

"I doubt it," was Dr. Lang's response.

"Ah, well," said her ladyship, when Dr. Lang had carefully unfolded the result of his embassy, "it is just as well. Marshlands has been much calmer since you went. Those last powders seem really quite the right thing."

Of course no one in Fenborough was surprised when, as soon as Joyce's mourning permitted, her wedding was merrily celebrated at the church where her ladyship had once upon a time taken her measure so disdainfully. Every one who came to look at Dr. Hepburn's grand-daughter adorned as a bride knew that she had been setting her cap at Dr. Lang from the very first, and that she had succeeded in entrapping him by wiles which no well-brought-up girl would have stooped to practise.

When Dr. Lang proclaims himself the happiest husband of the most charming wife alive, Miss Stow raises her hands and wonders to Mrs. Wyeth how long that state of foolish blindness will last. It has lasted undisturbed for some time now, and shows no sign of change.

Lord Marshlands sent the happy couple a magnificent wedding present from Japan, and shortly afterwards cast his noble family into the deepest tribulation by announcing from New York that he had just married the widow of a Chicago millionaire, with whom he had travelled from Nagasaki to San Francisco.

CAUGHT IN A LEVANTER.

By THOMAS E. SOUTHEE.

Author of "Weatherbound," "Waterlogged," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I. BECALMED.

A LARGE schooner-yacht was lying becalmed in the Straits of Gibraltar. The rays of the noonday sun fell with languid sultriness on the white sails of the yacht, and on the clear blue water of the Mediterranean Sea, which sparkled in the sunlight. There was not a breath of wind stirring, not a cloud in the broad expanse of heaven.

The head of the yacht was boxing all round the compass; she was no longer controlled by the action of the helm.

"Well," remarked Augustus Buckley, a gentleman clothed in a gorgeous suit of flannel, who was sitting on the taffrail smoking a large pipe, "I must say I don't enjoy a calm at sea. Of all the discordant sounds I ever heard, these are the most disagreeable. To sit here, and have my sensitive nerves assailed by such a conglomeration of creaking, flapping, grinding, scruping, and other inharmonious sounds, such as have been distracting my acoustic organs for the last three hours, is enough to drive a fellow frantic."

"I think it has been said by an ancient philosopher," suggested his friend, Fred Roberts, who was reclining in a wicker-chair lazily puffing at a cigar, "that 'patience is a virtue,' and that 'experience makes fools wise'!"

"What an enormous amount of experience you must have had, then!" retorted Mr. Buckley.

"Aunty," cried a young lady who was reclining gracefully in an easy-chair, "I wish you would come to these boys. They are jangling again!"

"My dear Bertha," returned Miss Boyton, "I really must decline; they are incorrigible."

"Now, that's too bad, Miss Boyton!" interpolated Fred Roberts. "I did not think you would desert me in this my time of need. As to Miss Rantipole here," and he waved his hand loftily towards Bertha, "one is not surprised at anything she says or does. Jangling, indeed! The very word jars on my ears!"

"Yes, jangling!" repeated Bertha. "I used the word in its strictly lexicographical sense. You were disputing; perhaps you would like wrangling better?"

"Talk about jarring," said Mr. Buckley, as the yacht gave a sudden lurch, followed by a scruple from the main-gaff, and an accompanying crepitation from the boom, "there is something that jars in my ears!"

"Oh, horrid!" cried Miss Boyton; "it sets my teeth on edge."

Meantime Bertha had drawn herself up to her full height, and was casting at the amiable and philosophic Fred one of her most withering glances.

"Look at her now, Guss!" cried Roberts. "Don't she look grand?"

"Superb," responded Mr. Buckley.

"Now, boys," said Mr. Boyton, "I won't have my little girl teased."

"It's Fred, not me, sir," replied Badley. "He's the most dreadful torment I ever came across."

"Yes, yes, I know," replied the old gentleman, and then, after a pause, he continued: "But really this is tedious work! Blow, breezes, blow," and he unconsciously commenced to whistle to the wind.

"Pray don't do that, sir," interrupted Buckley. "The Mediterranean is a very beautiful but very treacherous sea, and if you whistle like that we might get a levanter, you know, and that would be no joke!"

"Don't listen to him, papa, dear," interposed Bertha. "Fancy a man being afraid of a breeze of wind! A levanter! If it was a hurricane or a tornado I could understand that there was something to be afraid of."

"It's all very well, Miss Bertha, but stop till you have seen what a levanter means," he replied, "and then I think you will alter your tune."

"There! there! it's coming," cried Bertha. "I can feel it on my cheek. Papa, will you instruct Captain Miles to have the cork-jackets and life-belts ready?"

There was a general laugh, but with regard to the breeze, Bertha was quite right, and in half an hour the "*Acantha*," with a fine westerly breeze, was running past the great rock of Gibraltar.

CHAPTER II. ON A LEE SHORE.

SEVERAL days of fair winds, smooth seas, and beautiful weather followed Majorca, with its numerous watch-towers, had been sighted; Sardinia had been passed, and they were sailing the lovely Tyrrhenian Sea. The mellow tints of evening were slowly creeping over the sky; there was not a single cloud, not even a streak of purple haze in the far-off western sky, where the glorious sun was slowly sinking into a waveless sea. Never was there a more beautiful sunset. Never had that deceitful Delilah of seas smiled more seductively as the soft twilight crept over its placid surface.

Watching this enchanting scene, with her arm resting in his, was Bertha Boyton and Fred Roberts.

"You won't tease me again, dear, will you? You won't call me Miss Rantipole any more?" she said softly.

"No, darling!" he replied, stooping down and kissing her. "Not if you don't flirt with that fellow Buckley."

"I never flirt, sir!" she said saucily; "not even with you."

The dinner was announced, and they descended to the saloon. Now the saloon of the "Acantha" was a sight worthy of notice; a more luxuriously-fitted cabin, with its gold-coloured damask divans and lounges, its harmonious decorations, its mirrors, and its piano, cannot be imagined.

But apart from the beauty and elegance of the surroundings, everything was "couleur de rose" with Bertha. Fred Roberts had proposed and had been accepted, and for the first time in her life Bertha had realised what true happiness was. Papa, who had guessed her secret, was beaming on her, and even stolid Aunt Margaret began to think there was something in the wind.

It was a happy and enjoyable meal, but like all others it came to an end. The heat was oppressive, and they were glad to get on deck again.

The wind had fallen, and there was a great hush; the sea was perfectly calm, and the atmosphere was strangely oppressive. In the south great banks of clouds were slowly gathering, and altogether the sky assumed a stormy and menacing aspect.

"I think we are in for a breeze, sir," said the skipper, addressing himself to Mr. Boyton.

"Yes, Miles, I am afraid we are," replied Mr. Boyton.

"And it strikes me, sir, that we are in an awkward position," continued the skipper. "If the gale comes from the south'ard we shall be on dead lee shore, and the coast about here is anything but a pleasant one. However, there's no telling what these levanters will do; they seem to me to blow from all points at once, and the danger results as much from the uncertainty of their course as from their violence."

At this moment a fork of lurid lightning darted across the dark clouds, and was followed by the roll of distant thunder.

Roberts and Bertha were standing side by side.

"How grand!" she whispered, as another great flash illuminated the sea and sky, followed by hoarse muttering of thunder, but more remote than the former.

At this moment the twilight was suddenly obliterated, and an impenetrable darkness overshadowed them. A moment afterwards a blue flame of lightning glanced across the sky and plunged into the sea,

and a peal of thunder, like the crash of doom, burst over their heads.

Bertha crept close to Fred, this time whispering:

"How awful!"

"You had better go below, darling; the rain will be upon us in a minute."

The skipper had not been idle; the bowsprit had been partially run in, the storm jib set, the mainsail and foresail close-reefed, and everything made snug in preparation for the gale.

The intense silence continued, and the men's voices, as they carried on their work, had a hollow and far-off sound. A moment afterwards was a sudden roar; the wind struck the yacht on the broadside, and the skipper's voice was heard above the howling of the wind, crying:

"Port! hard-a-port, down with it, man—luff and shake her, or over she goes!"

For a second or two Fred Roberts thought it was all over with them. The lee scupper was under water, and in another instant it was rushing over the deck and bubbling into the companions through the crevices. It seemed as though Davy Jones himself had clapperclawed the mast-heads, and was using them as levers to capsize her, while the sails were tugging at her as if they would have torn the spars out of her; so that he was expecting every second either that she would turn over keel up, or that the masts would snap off short by the deck. But at length the lively little craft came gaily to the wind, shaking her plumage like a wild duck, and then rushed off in a wild career over the waste of hissing waters.

"Rather a close shave, skipper," said Mr. Boyton, with a quiver in his voice.

"Yes, indeed, sir!" was the reply; "rather too close to be pleasant."

Bravely did the poor "Acantha" battle with the storm. It was blowing little short of a hurricane, and over the low bulwarks the billows rushed with almost irresistible fury, but she rose from them like a duck, and then dived down defiantly into the trough of the next one.

We must now descend to the cabin and see how Bertha and her aunt had been faring. For a few moments after the gale had struck her, and the yacht lay almost on her beam-ends, Bertha and Miss Boyton had been seated on one of the lounges aghast with terror, and then were suddenly thrown from it, and found themselves pitched over to leeward. For a moment or two they sat in a state of bewilderment,

struck with horror and dismay at the violence of the storm.

Poor Miss Boyton sat there pale, dumb, and motionless; she thought her last hour was come. Even when the yacht righted itself, the incessant rushing and washing of the water as it burst over the deck; the trampling of feet, the throwing down of ropes, the sharp, clear voice of the captain; the bellowing of the wind, and hoarse cries of the sailors, were all to her unintelligible, but, at the same time, fraught with terror.

"Come, aunty," said Bertha, holding out her hands, "the danger is all over, I hope. You see the steward and his mate are clearing up the wreck."

Miss Boyton had hardly been seated and had not yet recovered from her fright, when the three gentlemen came in search of what Mr. Boyton called a refresher.

"Oh, Robert!" she exclaimed, "how are things on deck? Shall we be drowned?"

"I hope not," replied her brother cheerily. "We must hope for the best; the wind may go down as quickly as it rose."

"Well, Miss Bertha," broke in Mr. Buckley, "what do you think now of a levanter?"

"That they are not things to be joked about," she answered snappishly.

"I have spoken to the skipper about the cork-jackets and life-belts, and you can have yours as soon as you say the word," he continued.

"That will do, that will do, Buckley!" interrupted Mr. Boyton. "This is no time for jokes and badinage. We none of us can make sure that we shall see the light of another day. Miles tells me the coast under our lee is a very dangerous one. Let us therefore be serious and sober-minded."

"But, papa," cried Bertha, "can nothing be done?"

"There is nothing to be done, child," replied Mr. Boyton. "All we can do is to trust in Heaven's good providence."

So the night wore on, a long and terrible one. The gale continued; the wind howled and raged; the sky was one entire black pall, through which an occasional flash of blue lightning burst out like tongues of flame, revealing, for the time, the huge and angry billows that rolled beneath.

As time advanced, faint streaks of the coming dawn began to show themselves in

the east. Then suddenly there was a lull in the gale; the horizon seemed to contract; the sea became black as ink, and the wind fell to a dead calm.

They were in the vortex, and the silence was appalling.

During this death-like pause in the tempest, infinitely more awful than the roaring of the gale, every sound on board was heard with startling distinctness. This lasted for a quarter of an hour, or more, and then in the distance there came a low but angry growl, and a thick mist came driving up astern. On and on came the gale, roaring angrily, while all around the "Acantha" was still and calm.

"Stand by! stand by! Hold on!" roared the skipper as the gale, in an almost opposite direction, came thundering down with stunning violence, tearing off the heads of the huge billows and crashing down their mountainous crests into a level plain of seething foam, while the "Acantha" was swept before it like an eggshell.

In the midst of this furious conflict of winds and waters, there came several sharp reports, like the firing of a cannon; the backstays and shrouds snapped off like pack-threads, and the masts, deprived of their supports, bent like willows before the gale, and then with a crash broke off short by the deck, and were blown clean over the bows into the sea.

CHAPTER III. FOR DEAR LIFE.

THE crash of the falling masts startled the two occupants of the cabin, and a simultaneous shriek escaped from both. That some dreadful calamity had befallen them was certain, but what was its nature they could not conceive, and they sat staring at one another in blank terror.

The tempest, meantime, continued with unabated fury, but above it all came the clear voice of the captain and the responsive shouts of the crew.

A quarter of an hour or more elapsed, then—boom! went a signal-gun, followed by the whirring of a rocket.

"What is that?" asked Miss Boyton.

"A signal of distress," replied Bertha.

"Then we must be in great danger!"

"Undoubtedly!"

Clank! clank! went the pumps, and boom! went another signal-gun of distress.

"That's the pumps," said Miss Boyton; "we must have sprung a leak!"

"Very probable," replied Bertha.

"What shall we do, dear? It's dread-

ful!" cried the poor lady. "Why, we shall all go to the bottom! Oh! why was I persuaded to come on this dreadful cruise?" and she buried her face in her hands and wept.

Half an hour had passed. The minute-gun continued, and the clanking of the pumps was incessant; but no one came to enlighten them as to the peril they were in, or the nature of the catastrophe which had caused it.

At last Fred Roberts came slowly down the companion stairs. He was drenched, white, and grimy, and, as Bertha sprang to meet him, she thought there was a look of despair on his countenance.

"Oh, Fred, dear," she cried anxiously, "what has been the matter, and why has no one been down to appease our anxiety?"

"Because there was not a hand to spare," he replied. "The vessel is dismasted, and has sprung a leak; and we have all been hard at work clearing the wreck and pumping. They are trying to discover the leak, and if possible, stop it!"

"But, suppose they do not succeed?"

"Then, unless succour comes, Heaven help us!"

"Below there!" sang out the skipper, coming half-way down the companion stairs. "Mr. Roberts! Good news, sir; help is coming; there is a ship in the distance, and she has answered our signals. She's a steamer, if I'm not mistaken, and I think the gale is abating!"

"Thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Miss Boyton, and the thanksgiving was echoed by Fred and Bertha.

"Come up and have a look, sir," said the skipper, and when the young man stood beside him, he pointed with his fingers. "There! there! almost dead in the wind's eye, and she's bearing down on us fast. At the rate she's travelling, she ought to be alongside in half an hour. But," he went on, lowering his voice, "what I wanted to say is—get the ladies on deck. There's over three feet of water in the hold, and if it comes to the worst, there's more chance for them up here than there would be below."

"Just so, Miles, you are quite right; come down with me, and we'll see what we can do."

"I don't want to frighten you, ladies," said the skipper when they had descended to the cabin, "but, you see, there's nothing like being prepared for the worst, even if the worst should not come. Now, here's two life-belts, and if you'll let me and Mr.

Roberts put them on—it's only a precaution, but I shall feel more satisfied."

"Oh!" cried Miss Boyton, "is it so bad as that?"

"It's bad enough, ma'am; but it won't be any the worse for taking precautions. Now, sir, you put this one on the young lady, and I'll see to Miss Boyton."

"Fred, dear," whispered Bertha, "you won't leave us alone again, will you?"

"No, dearest; only hadn't you better come on deck? It doesn't rain, and Captain Miles thinks it will be safer!"

"You think the poor 'Acantha' is doomed, then?" asked Bertha quietly.

"I'm afraid so. It's no use hiding the danger from you any longer. Our only chance is that the steamer may arrive in time to succour us."

When Bertha and her aunt got on deck, the scene which presented itself to their eyes was a strangely picturesque and almost diabolical one. They were burning a flare, the red flames of which leaped up high in the air, lighting up the deck of the poor dismasted yacht and the angry sea surrounding her with a vivid distinctness. The group of dark figures forward, and the men at the pumps, all stood out in strong relief against the stormy waters that enclosed them and the lurid clouds above.

The streaks of dawn were broadening, and the rain had ceased, but to windward the sky was black as pitch. In the midst of which, now and again, a rocket rose in a stream of light, and then burst into a flood of descending stars, and all was dark again.

The minutes passed quickly, the clanking of the pumps continued, accompanied occasionally by the boom of the minute-gun. The men worked on gallantly at the pumps; it was for life or death.

The water in the hold was increasing fast. There could be no doubt that the poor "Acantha" would founder; whether the souls on board were destined to go down with her was simply a question of time; it might be of minutes.

The great steamer was in full sight. Every time she rose on the crests of the billows, her three lights could be distinctly seen, and then, as she descended into the trough of the succeeding one, they disappeared from view.

Nearer and nearer she came. The poor "Acantha" was wallowing helplessly in the tumultuous sea. The cabin was half-full of water, and the channels were almost awash with the sea.

She was rapidly losing her buoyancy,

and the steamer was still some distance to windward, her huge form, rising on a mountainous wave, towering high above the battered hull of the poor "Acantha."

Instead of abating, the gale was raging with increased violence. The yacht shivered and creaked in every timber, while the sullen roar of the waters was deafening.

Miss Boyton and Bertha clung to the companion calmly awaiting their doom. The steamer rounded to under their lee. At this instant the "Acantha" gave a drunken, sickening lurch. There were cries of despair, and she pitched into the rising sea, groaning and trembling in every plank; then like a guilty thing, made another desperate plunge, and disappeared into the boiling surge.

CHAPTER IV. NOT A SIGN OF LIFE.

THE last sound that reached Fred Roberts's ear as he was rushing aft to Bertha's succour was her despairing cry for help. The next instant he was sucked down by the eddy of the sinking vessel, and all was dark and void. When he came to the surface he struck out boldly in the hope of getting clear of the raffle of wreck which surrounded him. When this was accomplished he looked round to see if among the pale, agonised faces and struggling forms in the water, he could see that of his brave little Bertha. No, she was not to be seen, and a sickening sensation seized him. At this moment he felt himself taken hold of and dragged into a boat, and he fainted.

When his recollection returned he was lying in a comfortable berth, and the doctor was administering some stimulants.

"Where is Bertha?" he murmured. "Is she saved?"

The doctor shook his head, saying:

"No ladies saved at present."

It seemed as if the destruction of the "Acantha" had calmed the rage of the tempest, for immediately afterwards the gale abated, and the sea began to grow calmer, sobbing sullenly like a child after a terrible fit of anger; the morning was dawning greyly. In the east the deep blue of the firmament was warming into magnificent purple, while the amber rays of the yet unseen sun were shooting up in fan-like beams across the sky. Every now and again fierce gusts of wind swept across the ocean, dying away, as it were, in a repentant moan, as if grieved at the destruction it had wrought.

It was with a painful sort of satisfaction that Bertha and Miss Boyton watched the approach of the steamer as she came towering above them on a great billow. It seemed to them that now their rescue was certain; they had no idea that the end of the "Acantha" was so close at hand. The steamer had rounded to, and had come almost to a standstill, and boats were being lowered. At this moment the yacht gave a great lurch and sank beneath them, and they were launched on the angry ocean, and for a time they were both unconscious. Bertha was the first to recover, and she looked around for help, but the steamer had forged ahead, and she and the boats were some distance from them; the next instant a towering wave came roaring down upon them, and they were buried in its angry foam. When this had passed and she had somewhat recovered her breath, Bertha saw her aunt floating helplessly some distance from her, and she swam towards her. The poor lady was in a dead faint, and Bertha raised her head and supported it clear of the water.

A horrible thought came into her mind; with help so near were they to be left to perish! The girl's heart was filled with despair, and she uttered a piteous cry, but it was weak and faint, and there was no response.

Still they floated on, the distance between them and the steamer gradually increasing.

Time went on; the boats which had been moving and circling about on the spot where the yacht had sunk, had evidently given up all further search, had gone back, and were being hauled up; the propellers began to revolve, and the steamer commenced to move slowly ahead. With a cry the poor girl fainted.

"You say there were ladies on board, doctor?" said the captain of the steamer, which was now lying head to the sea, and blowing off steam with angry violence. "I can see nothing of them. I'm afraid they must have gone down with the yacht."

"The gentlemen say they had life-belts on, so that their bodies would not sink," replied the doctor.

The two were standing on the bridge, and the captain was sweeping the ocean with his glass.

"Have a look yourself and see if you can make anything out," said the captain, handing the binocular to his companion.

For some two or three minutes the glass continued to move, as the doctor searched minutely the sea to leeward.

"Yes," he said, "there is something floating there; but I cannot make out what it is."

"Where away?" asked the captain, as he took back the glass.

"About south-west by south. You will see it as it rises on the crests."

"Yes, doctor, you are right," said the captain, as he concentrated his gaze on a small object that rose on the summit of a billow. "There is something; two somethings if I'm not mistaken." Then he turned and hailed the deck. "Mr. Dant," he said, "let them put a compass on board one of the lifeboats, and steer south-west by south. There is something floating there I want examined. They say there were ladies on board; it may be them."

The boat was manned and lowered, and as soon as she touched the water the tackles were unhooked. The six oars fell simultaneously into the water, and the men pulled with a will.

"All together, my bonnies," said the boatswain, who had charge of the boat. "The doctor says there were ladies on board, and please Heaven we are going to save 'em!" and the men started with a cheer.

"I can see something!" exclaimed the boatswain, after a time. "Pull more to starboard, pull, my lads, pull! Larboard oars best," he continued. "Now, right as you go. There! if that's not a woman's head I'm a Dutchman!" he concluded.

The captain and the doctor still remained on the bridge, watching with intense interest the movements of the boat.

"They have found something," said the captain, as the men tossed their oars, and the boat remained stationary.

"You said there were two ladies, doctor, didn't you?" he went on.

"Yes," he replied.

"Then I think they have got 'em both."

"I hope so," replied the doctor, "but I'm afraid there is very little chance for them; they have been some time in the water."

"More work for you, doctor," said the captain a few minutes after, as two apparently inanimate bodies were lifted out of the boat and carefully taken below.

"Stark dead, sir, I think," replied the boatswain, in answer to the captain's enquiry; "not a sign of life, as far as I could see!"

"Billy's got his hands full," remarked one of the men, as the doctor disappeared down the companion.

"Yes, but I'm afraid they are beyond his skill," answered another.

"Such a sweet, pretty creature!" said another. "I hope she ain't dead!"

CHAPTER V.

THE CALM AFTER THE STORM

THE two inanimate forms which were taken below were, as the reader may have already concluded, those of Bertha and Miss Boyton, and as the boatswain had said, there did not appear to be the smallest signs of life about their pale and corpse-like faces. But Mr. Williams—Dr. Billy, as the men familiarly called him—was a man of skill and resources, and as soon as they had been stripped and put into warm beds, he commenced, with the assistance of the stewardess and some of the lady passengers, to adopt active measures to, if possible, restore circulation and animation. Artificial respiration, rubbing, and everything that science had suggested to induce circulation and warmth had been carried on for more than an hour without any sign of returning consciousness.

Meantime the "Aruba" had resumed her course, and was steaming on at full speed in the direction of Malta.

In the saloon there was considerable anxiety and excitement as to the progress of the operation. Time went on, the under-steward had just reported "no change," when he almost immediately returned, and going up to Mr. Boyton said:

"Dr. Williams's compliments, sir, and he is happy to say both ladies have recovered consciousness."

"Thank Heaven! thank Heaven!" cried the old gentleman, and his thanksgiving was echoed on all sides—by none more fervently than Fred Roberts and Augustus Buckley.

Perhaps no two persons had ever been nearer the gates of eternity than Bertha and Miss Boyton, and no two mortals were ever more truly thankful for their merciful preservation than they were.

Bertha, after she recovered consciousness, progressed with such rapidity that ere half an hour had elapsed she was able to sit up and listen to the doctor's account of the circumstances attending her rescue.

Miss Boyton was so completely overcome that she was obliged to remain in her

berth; but after a time, Bertha, in a sort of jury-rig furnished by the kindness of the lady passengers, came on deck, and Fred Roberts hastened to offer her his arm and lead her to a seat, and as he pressed her arm to his side she felt his heart beating wildly.

"What is the matter, Fred, dear?" she asked; "what makes you so pale, and why are you so excited?"

"Simply because you are here, well and safe. My heart is full of thankfulness and gratitude. Thankfulness to have you once more safe by my side, and gratitude to Heaven for all our escapes."

They sat on hand in hand in that happy silence which is so eloquent to the hearts of lovers.

It was a soft, moonlit night as the little party of five, who had been rescued after the wreck of the "Acantha," sat in one of the best rooms in the "Medina Hotel," gazing out on to the great rocky island of Malta, its massive fortifications standing out in bold relief against the blue unclouded sky.

The loss of a large yacht, and the rescue of her passengers and crew, would be an excitement anywhere; but it was so novel and unprecedented an item in the lives of the garrison and inhabitants of Malta, that either from kindness or curiosity, many people had called at the hotel, full of generous sympathy and offers of assistance. It was after a day of what Augustus Buckley called lionisation, that we find our little party taking their ease, the ladies in soft arm-chairs, and the gentlemen on the balcony smoking.

"Phew!" blew out Mr. Buckley, "how hot it is!"

"Hot!" exclaimed Miss Boyton. "I don't think it is even warm."

"Oh, aunty! you don't mean that!" replied Bertha questioningly.

"Yes, I do, dear; I'm not warm. I don't think I shall ever be warm again; and as to the sea, if I ever get back to Wandaford, I'll take good care not to trust myself to its tender mercies again." She paused for a moment, and then she broke out again: "Dear! dear! what an escape! I really think I should have died if it had not been for you," addressing Bertha. "I shall never forget it!"

"Neither shall I, my dear lady," responded Mr. Roberts. "It's not an experience one is likely to forget. We all had a very narrow squeak for our lives;

but I think our friend Buckley had the narrowest of all; but there, if a fellow's born to be hanged it's no use trying to drown him!"

"Of course not," replied Buckley, with a laugh. "It's no use fighting against destiny; but I'm not going to hop off the hooks just yet. I'll be hanged if I do!"

"Now, boys," broke in Mr. Boyton, "no more squabbling; let us, who have passed through such great peril, be serious and sober-minded."

"There is one thing, I think," continued Buckley, "that Miss Bertha will do well to remember, and that is not again to laugh at the idea of being 'caught in a levanter.'"

GOOD-BYE TO SUMMER

BY PLEYDELL NORTH.

Author of "His Little Girl," "The Story of an Old Piano," etc., etc.

"SHE looks thirty-five."

"I believe she is forty at least."

"And he is only thirty."

"And so good-looking."

"And she is hardly pretty."

"It seems a pity——"

"I call it outrageous!"

Three women in a drawing-room drinking tea. The drawing-room looked on to a lawn, and across the lawn a short while ago a man and a woman had passed.

They had wandered out of sight before the comments which they had evoked had been completed, down into the sunny garden. The woman was small, with a face from which certainly the bloom of youth had faded, but which was yet unlined by age, and held its own attraction. This lay rather in its suggestive interest than in any distinct lines of beauty; it was a little sorrowful, yet full of wistful vagaries, beneath which lay, perhaps, much inherent sweetness and latent strength.

Her companion was tall, well-made, frank-faced, fairly justifying the eulogiums passed upon him in the drawing-room. He looked the age assigned him, not more. At the present moment he had the air of a man deeply moved, bent upon gaining his point, but still uncertain of success.

If any answer to his passion lurked in her eyes it was veiled, the lines of her mouth were set and somewhat defiant; her whole air conveyed an idea of struggle against herself and him.

"How can I answer you differently?"

she was saying with forced constraint. "For a few years—yes—you would be content. I do not undervalue myself. I know that now, in the present, I should not disappoint you. I would be to you what you say you need. But when age made itself really felt, visible, and you were still young—— Oh, I can't do it."

"What can you think of me?" he said angrily. "Say at once that you do not love me. Love couldn't reason with mathematical exactness, looking forward, counting days and years for its duration."

Her face softened, then grew illumined with a passion that changed it into positive beauty.

"Oh, I love you too well. If I could be to you just what you want now, afterwards I should be content to die."

He laughed with the joyousness of a man who, having gained his immediate desire, is content.

"Well, we'll try it, only postpone the climax indefinitely. Nay, I am not afraid. Trust me a little, Enone, and yourself. Death itself could not loosen your power. What do the years matter to you and me? You will never grow old, love, till I do——"

He held her face softly between his hands, looking into the eyes which made her chief beauty—vague in colour, mysterious as living jewels, holding their own unfathomable light.

She had argued the case with him so often, she had tried to persuade him that she could be his friend, help, confidante, until he wearied and met the woman of whom she knew herself to be but the prototype. She had gauged her strength, and believed that she could so have acted. Why should she tie his young manhood to a half-spent life with irrevocable fixity?

But now as he looked into her eyes her heart failed her; happiness was so near on the one hand, on the other lay the dark valley of long endurance, constant self-suppression, the deeper shadows of unloved solitude and age.

These two people having made up their minds, there was no one to say them nay. Paul Everard was independent, and however much his aunt, Miss Everard, the hostess of the drawing-room, with whom Enone was staying, might disapprove the turn of events, she had no power of interference.

Craven Hall, the property of the Everards, lay scarcely ten miles away. Paul was its undisputed master, and there within a few months Enone found her home.

Six years had passed away of the life of Enone Everard, years which to all outward appearance had brought ample fulfilment of her most hopeful dreams. Yet she hardly bore the look of a happy woman as one autumn afternoon she stood alone in the hall of her own home, a grey figure in a patch of shade on the grey marble, surrounded by slanting rays of yellow sunlight falling through high windows. She was evidently listening, yet the only sounds audible above the ordinary hum of country afternoon life, or stillness, were the lessening sounds of the thud of horses' hoofs down the drive without. A look of strained attention faded from her face as she lost their last echo, and her lips drew in with a sigh of pain.

The years had dealt gently with Enone, as they are apt to do with women of her type, whose attraction depends greatly upon the gathered sweetness of an ideal life, pure in the simplicity of its aim. The far-seeing eyes were clear and luminous as of old, the mouth as mobile, but the hair had in some lights lost its brilliance. She was well and carefully dressed, after the fashion of a woman who still aims at pleasing other eyes than her own, and as she turned and mounted the stairway with a somewhat lagging step, quivering lips and varying colour gave signs all too evident of the keen vitality of absorbing passion in her slight frame.

The thud of hoofs to which she had been listening had been caused by her husband's bay horse, accompanied by the white mare Jenny, hitherto never ridden save by herself, mounted to-day for the first time by one of her guests, Vivienne Desart.

The master of Craven Hall had made his mark during the past few years, and more than once he had been heard to attribute any success he had attained to the influence of his wife.

For the last three years he had represented the western division of his county, and during that time had issued one or two striking pamphlets on the burning questions of the hour.

His utterances in the House, if not frequent, had also attracted considerable remark; and he was supposed to stand well with the Government, being spoken of generally as one of the rising men of the day. But to Enone success, of its very nature, threatened disillusionment.

Perhaps, after the manner of men, Everard had grown accustomed to his wife, and as the interests of public life

more unren ittingly absorbed his attention, he had ceased to think actively of her claims. She was always at hand when needed; her constant toil in his interests, which were hers, was a matter of course; failure on her part was not to be thought of. It never occurred to him that she might need reassurance.

Then in the spring of the present year her health had failed. She was unable to enter much into society, and in enforced solitude her mind, rendered morbidly active by weakness, dwelt unhealthily upon what she read as her husband's growing coldness.

She was still something of an invalid now, when her home was filled with guests, and vague fear had begun to take cruel shape and form, for among her visitors was Vivienne Desart, asked against her own will and by her husband's special desire.

Enone had met Miss Desart during the past season, and had conceived for her that intuitive dislike which some women regard as a premonition. Indeed, from any other point of view the dislike was difficult to account for. Miss Desart was brilliant, good-looking, and amusing, a general favourite in society, notwithstanding the fact that the close of her fourth season saw her still unmarried.

She was undeniably handsome, clever in assimilating current views, and known to be her uncle's sole heiress, yet after a certain point the men hung back. Oddly enough, no one thought of attributing the failure in reaching a satisfactory climax to disinclination on the girl's own part.

Political reasons had rendered an invitation to Craven Hall advisable as regarded Miss Desart's relations, but Enone felt the inclusion of the young lady herself altogether superfluous.

Now, when Mrs. Everard reached the gallery over the hall she turned aside from the solitude she longed for in her own chamber, and entered a small drawing-room, which from its view across the park was a favourite afternoon resort of those who remained in the house. The most idle gossip, she told herself, would serve her better at the present moment than thought.

As chance would have it, the room was only occupied by Mrs. Desart.

When Enone dropped listlessly into the chair beside her work-table, taking up some lace which lay ready to her hand, the stout, comfortable lady on the sofa rose with a little bustle of concern.

"You poor dear, how pale you do look, to be sure! Your husband should take

more thought for your health, Mr. Everard, he really should; but then men—young men especially—are all the same: they feel so strong and hearty themselves that they can't understand weakness and ailments. I'm sure I often congratulate myself that Desart 'll have to go down the hill ahead of me. I've got ten years the advantage of him, and a woman wants that.

While she was talking Mrs. Desart fussed restlessly, supplying Enone with undesired cushions and footstool, and showing her other attentions irritating to an overtaxed nerve. Certainly, the report that old Desart had "married beneath him" bore good evidence of foundation. Yet the woman was not ill-natured. It was not until she saw the increased pallor of her hostess's face, and noticed the stiffness of the upright figure, that she became conscious of her blunder, and proceeded to endorse it by explanations.

"Not of course but that you're different, Mrs. Everard—apart from all that—everybody knows there's not such a devoted couple in the county as you and Mr. Everard."

"I think the relations of husband and wife can hardly be judged by strangers," said Enone coldly. "I am thankful, however, to say that my married life has been a very happy one."

"So has mine," said Mrs. Desart heartily—"all but the one trouble of having no children. No one can deny but it's hard on a man—not but that Mr. Desart is very much set on Vivienne—she's a fine girl, and a great comfort when she's with us. It's a pity she don't marry; as I tell her, after a girl has passed six or seven-and-twenty her chances are poor."

"Doubtless it is Miss Desart's own fault that she has not married," said Mrs. Everard. "I cannot blame any one for having some reticence on the point."

"Well, I don't know," said candid Mrs. Desart. "The men don't seem to take to Vivienne beyond a certain point, and yet she's just the sort of girl to be a sensible companion to a man, and Mr. Desart wouldn't be mean about the money, I can tell you, if he liked her choice, and she's just the girl to make a good wife. She was riding beside Mr. Everard, I saw, to-day when they started. I had hoped that young Compton was taken with her, but they seemed enjoying themselves; I heard them laughing all down the drive—it's natural with young people, isn't it? I notice she can always brighten up Mr. Everard, and she can ride well, Vivienne

can. Mr. Desart spared neither money nor pains on her education."

So the woman prattled on—not of maliciousness, but in ignorance—stabbing Enone's overburdened heart with every fresh utterance.

She bore it unflinchingly, as women can, sewing little points of pain into the pattern of her lace, until the entrance of the tea-tray brought diversion.

The riding-party returned only an hour before dinner. Enone saw nothing of her husband until he came up to dress; then he called to her a few words from his dressing-room, chiefly concerning alterations required in the stables and a new horse he thought of buying.

Miss Desart was a little late in putting in an appearance in the drawing-room. She was not of a temperament to allow the thought that she was being waited for to interfere with her processes of equipment. A long ride required half an hour's complete rest, and the remaining time was all too short for a toilet.

When she did appear, however, she was more than usually brilliant. She had chosen a gown of yellow satin, veiled in a kind of golden gauze. At every point her armour was complete; arms, bosom, neck gleamed like tinted ivory, warm and breathing through the golden tissue. She moved with a sinuous grace, falling into attitudes which Enone felt repulsive, although not openly outraging the canons of taste. As usual the conversation, the attraction of the room centred around her; she dissipated the dulness of the waiting moments for dinner; she was greeted presently with a hail of question and comment from the men, which she answered with a frank freedom which carried her over the thinnest and most dangerous places. A nice, frank, bright girl with no nonsense about her, was the verdict of the county folk, the uninitiated. What others thought remained unsaid.

The evening was a quiet one. The women chatted till the men came to the drawing-room. Miss Desart amused herself slumberously over a photograph book. Then some one asked for music, and she was called upon to sing.

Enone had gone to the inner drawing-room, separated by heavy velvet curtains looped back. Just within the curtains, in the corner of the larger room near the fireplace, stood the piano, an Erard's grand. Miss Desart complained that she had left her music upstairs. Everard rang to order

her portfolio, and in the meantime brought forward that of his wife.

"Oh, this sweet old song! Mr. Everard, I remember hearing you sing it last year; it is so deliciously sentimental. Quite too too, don't you know. Will you let me play it for you now, or is that privilege reserved for Mrs. Everard?"

"I fear the high notes are beyond me to-night, otherwise——"

"Oh! I'll help you out, shall I? Mrs. Everard has let you get out of practice, I fear; but I expect it will go all right."

The song was certainly an impassioned one. Years ago it had held for Enone the first whispered possibility of the love of the man to whom she had since consecrated her life, and he had never sung it since but with her.

She had built around it some of the fair romance of a loving woman's life, and held it sacred still, although its music had long been silent. She was returning to the larger drawing-room when she heard the first chords struck by a strange hand—whose she felt there was no need to ask—and the melody taken up by her husband's voice. She crouched back, her dark velvet gown lost in the darker velvet curtain which she held, her pale face outlined against its folds.

Everard was out of practice, and as he had foretold, his voice failed him in the higher notes; then the clear soprano of a woman took up the refrain, rising in impassioned cadence.

That night Enone lay many hours awake, open-eyed and tearless. Upon every treasured fable of her life it seemed to her that this woman's hand was being laid. How could Everard have sung it, how could he? He might have let the old dream die in peace. She failed to realise that to the man's nature the incident probably held no importance.

On the morrow she arose to a sense of her folly. She had been overwrought, hysterical, extravagant, and imaginative. She heaped blame upon herself; she would speak to Paul, tell him all that was oppressing her. He would help her out of her folly, clear the mists away.

That silly, ill-chosen talk of Mrs. Desart was pressing upon her brain. But at breakfast Miss Desart challenged her host to a set of tennis; other duties claimed Enone—the ordinary routine of life. Everard's indifference chilled the excitement which would have enabled her to speak, and the explanation was never made.

For some little time after this the days

wore on with outward smoothness. Enone's fit of hopeful penitence passed away. Vivienne Desart was always at Paul's side; she sang with him, rode with him, walked or played tennis with him, discussed, it was to be supposed, his hopes, projects, and ambitions—for to his wife he had grown silent—and seemed content.

Paul Everard was at this time a fine-looking man in the full power and activity of manhood, handsomer than when he had wooed Enone. One night when a carpet dance had been suggested and Enone was playing waltzes at the piano, she heard some one near her remark:

"What a splendid couple Miss Desart and Mr. Everard make!" and she knew that her husband and Vivienne had swept past together. Her fingers kept their rhythmical beat, and she gave no sign, but in her heart she began to fancy other utterances. "What a pity such a man should be tied to that plain, elderly woman!"

Had not the thought occurred to Paul already? Down to her inmost thought she held him innocent of intentional evil—she told herself, rather, that it was all quite natural, and to be expected. Had she not bargained her life for a few years of happiness? She pondered how best she might fulfil her vow of considering before all things Everard's well-being.

Meanwhile, her husband remained unobservant of change in her; she was always in her place, always ready to fulfil the duties of her position. People said she looked ill, and was strangely inanimate; then, after a while, other remarks were made in whispers. One day at luncheon, however, Enone heard her husband excuse himself from joining a party arranged for the afternoon to drive to some ruins about five miles away. He put forward the plea of business with his agent, and she knew that he hated excursions of the sort; but there was comfort in the thought that the prospect of the uninterrupted society of Vivienne Desart for some hours had been insufficient to overbalance his objection. The party had been so arranged that it would have fallen to his lot to drive her in the dog-cart—a function which he now relegated to Mr. Compton, to the lady's evident chagrin. Enone had no difficulty in securing her own immunity; it seemed to be taken for granted of late that the hostess should feel unfit or disinclined for active participation in the amusements of the hour.

She saw her guests start, and noticed

with some apprehension that, when he way down the drive, Miss Desart insisted upon taking the reins.

The horse was a difficult one to manage but it was too late for warning or interference. She remarked upon the fact, however, to her husband, who was standing near upon the steps.

"Oh, they're all right," he said carelessly; "she can drive."

As they turned away together he added a few kindly words. Perhaps the wanness of her face, seen in the breadth of light struck him, for he told her that she looked as though she needed fresh air, and advised her going for a stroll in the woods. Her heart leaped suddenly. Dared she ask him to accompany her?

Before she could frame the words the agent was seen coming towards them; Paul went to meet him, and once more opportunity was lost. After that Enone had no inclination for the woods; she went to her own room and sat down to think. The man would stay probably about an hour, and then Paul would go to the library to write for the evening mail; he would order his tea to be taken to him there. A few months ago he would have come straight to her room to talk over the business in hand. Still, those few words upon the terrace had given her courage; perhaps, after all, the situation was greatly of her own creation, and needed only those few words which yet it seemed always so impossible to speak. Such a chance as the present might not occur again while their guests remained; when Paul was in the library alone she would go down to him. She waited, counting time almost by the anxious beats of a heart concentrated upon a venture which she believed held the final issues of her life. At length she heard her husband's farewell words to the man of business, then his step across the hall, the shutting of the library door. She waited still a few minutes, pressing her hand to her side, trying to drive back the nervous faintness which she knew would make her stumble in her speech. Then she poured some eau-de-cologne into a glass and drank it; that brought a faint flush to her cheek and steadied her nerve for the moment.

She descended the stairs, driving back foreboding by rehearsing the scene that lay before her. She would go straight to his side, lay her hand upon his shoulder, and look into his face in the old way. Then, if he answered her gently, kindly, she would kneel beside him, perhaps he

would put his arm about her, and her head would find its rest in the old place, and she would pour out all her woe, and there would be peace.

She held the handle of the door, turned it softly, and looked in. Her husband was sitting in his usual chair, his back partly towards the door; kneeling by his side, in her place, was Vivienne Desart.

The woman's face was upturned, pleading, softened, half tearful. The expression on that of the man she could not see—whether it was full requital or the indulgent toleration accorded by a weak man to a woman's flattery and despicable sin.

Nine women out of ten would probably have asserted their outraged dignity and assailed rights on the spot for the sake of possible vengeance.

Such a course was impossible to Enone. She softly closed the door and stole away. The deeper the wound, the keener the wrong, the more sensitively she shrank from its outward proclamation.

Even having gained the shelter of her own room, she neither swooned nor gave way to violence of feeling; she seemed fully alive, and yet incapable of sensation, while looking forward with dumb terror to the awakening of stunned faculties.

Still in the same lethargic state, she allowed her maid to dress her for dinner, even exchanged a few words with her husband through the open door of the dressing-room.

In the drawing-room she speedily heard the ostensible reason for the return of Miss Desart. The horse had bolted, and although no serious damage had occurred, Miss Desart had been too much shaken and alarmed to continue the expedition, and Mr. Compton had accordingly brought her home.

Enone was able to fill the hiatus in the story:

Frank Compton had probably remained in the stables, examining the horse; Vivienne had taken refuge in the library, judging pretty accurately of the likelihood of being found there by her host. The conducting circumstances made little difference to the result, and the fact that Miss Desart's shaken nerves had needed consolation hardly palliated the manner in which it had been sought.

By the majority of the company, however, the incident was hailed as a safe outlet for remark and conjecture in the present rather strained position of affairs, and the little excitement of talk that

surrounded it helped Enone to escape self-betrayal. But beneath her half-drooped lids her eyes burned hotly; no accent, look, or tone, either of her husband or of Miss Desart, was lost upon her; every minute incident of the long, dragging evening seemed charged with terrible significance. She lay awake through the night—with eyes staring into the darkness—trying to grapple with the pain which now threatened to master her; very powers of reason, as an enemy unleashed.

Could she have felt assured of the endurance of his new infatuation, of the worthiness and fitness of the woman who had supplanted her, of the ability of Vivienne Desart to consummate in Paul's life the work she herself had begun, she told herself that her path would have lain plainly before her and been comparatively easy, but, alas, on either side, in her life or death, she saw only ruin for the man whose fate she held of infinitely greater importance than her own.

One immediate necessity, however, became clear with the growing hours—for her own honour and the safety of those others concerned, it was necessary that her knowledge of the position should be made plain, and that Miss Desart should leave the house so long as she remained within it.

She rose with the determination to avail herself of the first opportunity of speaking to Paul.

The morning was fortunately wet. Miss Desart—tired, it was to be supposed, with her adventure of the previous day—breakfasted in her room.

When Paul Everard went to his study with his letters and paper, Enone almost immediately followed him.

When she entered the room, he at once rose and pulled forward a chair—under no circumstances could he forget outward acts of courtesy, even to his wife.

She seated herself with scarcely a quickening of the tired beats of her heart.

"You look ill, Enone. I have heard one or two people remark upon it," he said kindly. "So soon as the house is cleared we will go away to Scotland for a month; you need the change."

She tried to speak, to moisten her dried lips, but no words came.

"Is there anything I can do for you this morning?" he went on.

"Paul!"

He started at the sound of her voice. For the first time he eyed her, curiously, keenly, like a man alarmed. A flush

mounted to his forehead, to her staring eyes an acknowledgement of guilt.

"Paul, I opened the library door yesterday, when——"

"Well—when?" he said impatiently.

"You know when—can guess—I do not want to make any scene, any complaints; I have felt it coming for so long. I have only to say that I must—it is necessary that Miss Desart should withdraw from the house—for—for a little while——"

"For Heaven's sake, Enone, don't be so mad. I forbid that such an insult should be offered to any guest of mine."

The insult to herself, then, was to remain unatoned—must even continue.

"Only for a little while, Paul," she said faintly. "To remain beneath the same roof and both alive—it cannot be."

Once more he was startled.

What depths of passion or madness lay hid beneath the softness of this gentle-natured woman? An idea of possible tragedy crossed his mind—of real danger—danger to Vivienne Desart.

He thrust the notion aside as absurd; Enone had always been amenable to his lightest word, incapable, he believed, of sustained or passionate wrath.

She looked old and haggard this morning after the long, sleepless hours and in the strong light; the man, whatever his sense of innocence or guilt, felt that the latter, at any rate, was an unproved quantity; therefore Enone was causing a great deal of unpleasantness on supposititious grounds; therefore anger on his part was justifiable and sensible, as likely to bring her back to the level of common sense.

"You are talking extravagant nonsense," he said. "From the first you have misjudged Miss Desart, seeing her with the eyes of a jealous woman; now you do not even realise the meaning of your words; when you are rational we will speak of this again."

He gathered up his papers to leave her.

"Paul," she pleaded, "it would only be for a little while, then it is I who will go—let me have peace till then."

He stopped, half-way to the door, looking back.

"You seem determined to bring a scandal upon your name and mine—to break up and disgrace your home—ruin me by your outrageous folly. If I can help it you shall do nothing of the kind—you shall not go—at present." Her last words had, as a matter of fact, wrought him to a

white heat of passion. After a moment's pause he went on: "Of course, if, later on, you wish to bring about a separation, I shall not oppose you."

Then he left her. He had not realised the full weight of his words. The suddenness of her revolt had made it utterly astounding; the very manner of it was a fresh irritation. If she had stormed and upbraided, an outlet from the position might have been found. Enone sat for awhile quite still, the clang of his last sentence beating upon her brain.

She could no longer doubt the complete death of his love. He had, as a matter of fact, welcomed the idea of separation hardly born in her own mind. His only fear had been the fear of scandal for Vivienne Desart.

During the day she thought a good deal of those other words of his: "You have misjudged Vivienne Desart from the first, seeing her with the eyes of a jealous woman."

Perhaps this was true, and she might yet secure Paul's happiness. Who had ever spoken ill of the girl?

Yet in the evening she watched eagerly. Would he show any signs of relenting—of desire, even now, to atone? He treated her with cold courtesy.

Towards Miss Desart his manner remained unchanged. Enone made an excuse for leaving her guests at an early hour. Indeed, her face made excuse superfluous. As she passed a recess where two people sat chatting, half hidden, she heard a voice say: "Mrs. Everard looks perfectly awful to-night; she haunts me." And another: "Yes, fancy having such a face of doom opposite you for the remainder of your natural life! Those marriages are always a mistake."

A little further along the gallery she heard her husband's voice mingled with the laughter of Vivienne Desart. They were arranging some tableaux for the following night in the morning-room, and the door was partly open; the other performers had gone in search of further properties, and for the moment these two were alone.

The scene chosen was the parting of Hector and Andromache. Vivienne had robed herself in her classic folds, and even as the true wife passed, they fell into the rehearsal of the stage attitude—the woman's arms raised, resting upon the man's shoulders, her face upturned.

Almost as a breath, with quickened ears, Enone caught her words:

"Ah, that it were true!"

And his:

"Perhaps in its fullest meaning——"

The sequel remained unspoken.

She dragged herself away to the solitude which was her only refuge. She was scarcely conscious of surprise; every chance thrust of circumstance surely combined to urge her into a despair which weakness had no power to combat. Within her room, she locked the door and took from her medicine-chest a bottle labelled "laudanum," which she placed on a table beside the couch at the foot of the bed, then sat down to her writing-table.

She wrote to Paul Everard her last love-letter, telling him as simply as she could how, feeling that her life's work was done, she had determined to end it, rather for his sake than for lack of courage to bear the burden further.

Once she faltered and threw down the pen. It was when she remembered that death meant never to see his face again nor hear his voice.

Then she poured out her love for him in words rendered sacred by a wife's fidelity—possible by the limitless finality of her farewell.

She folded and addressed the letter, and left it where he would see it. Then she took off her dinner-gown, and put on a long white morning wrapper. She had often told herself that she was too old to wear white. But this was her second bridal. Then she hesitated. She had been taught to pray, but the custom had become mechanical in her riper years, for she had no clear faith, and of late her love had stultified even the desire for enquiry or sense of need.

Should she pray to-night?

She stood meekly in her long white gown, with folded hands upon her bosom—a poor, distraught soul beating tired wings in the dark—and said "Our Father" through, with but dim conception of any meaning that might be attached. Yet the words were uttered: "Deliver us from evil." Then she moved forward, and poured the contents of the laudanum bottle into a glass.

Paul Everard, coming to his senses, and disentangling himself from the attentions of Andromache somewhat abruptly, had stepped to the open door of the room in time to see his wife disappear down the gallery.

The helpless despair of her face during

the evening had aggravated him afresh; but now something in the slow languor of her walk, her whole attitude, as she passed out of his sight, filled him with vague alarm, and for the first time acknowledged self-reproach. He told himself that those half-uttered words had to him meant nothing; but if by any possibility heard by her——

In his disquiet the upraised white arms grew snake-like to his imagination, the low whisper which had wrung response, the whisper of a devil.

When he returned to the drawing-room, Enone's absence from the foreground of the scene aided the return of her power; he almost determined to seek her, to make some attempt at explanation and reconciliation.

When an hour passed without her return he went up to her room, and finding the first door locked and receiving no answer to his summons, entered hurriedly through the adjoining chamber. He was met by a sickly smell which made him start nervously, then on the couch at the foot of the bed he saw the white figure lying as it had fallen, motionless, the head thrown back upon the outstretched arm.

For a moment he stood looking down at her. It was a deep and apparently breathless slumber, and her face was marble white; but in the depth of the stillness, the lines marked by middle age, anxiety, and sorrow had faded. It was a waxen image of a younger woman even than she whom he had wooed and loved seven years before, on which he looked.

"She has fallen asleep," he said, with an effort at self-reassurance. With that sickening smell still in his nostrils, he stooped and laid his hand upon her heart, and bent his head that her faint breath might fan his cheek. Then he flung the window open wide, and pulled furiously at the bell. In passing the writing-table he saw the letter addressed to himself. Breaking the seal, he read enough, even in the moments that passed before the servants came hurrying, to know what he had done.

No medical aid was to be had within five miles, and when messengers had been despatched, Everard entered upon the most bitter and momentous hour of his life. He watched the efforts to restore consciousness to the white, fragile form, knowing in his heart their futility, yet with eager impatience, until the frightened women stole away, leaving him alone in its dread presence. He read her letter kneeling by



